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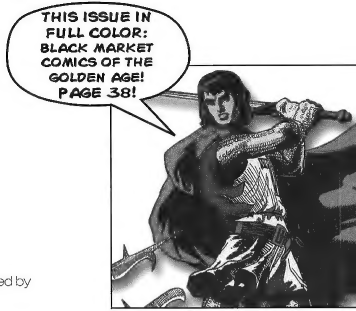

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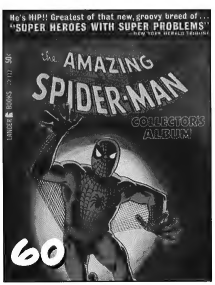
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THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
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60

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Looking Back and Looking Ahead

Do you realize that *CBM* has been around now for over ten years, and that I am now working on my 25th issue as Publisher/Editor? How time flies when you're having fun!

Gary Carter's concept of this magazine provided the mold which has shaped *CBM*, and although I have made some changes in my tenure as Editor, the mission statement of the magazine is still to bring you informative articles and interviews about comic books, mostly Golden and Silver Age comics, with a monthly review of what is happening in the marketplace.

But the world of collecting comics has changed a lot in those ten years. Ebay has brought a comic shopping place to everyone through their home computer, a market which changes on a daily basis, and CGC with its grading and slabbing services has caused huge ripples in the market. Auction houses like Heritage and MastroNet have come along and helped push prices to new levels.

And with other magazines like *Alter Ego*, *Comic Book Artist*, *Hogan's Alley*, and others entering the picture with their own individual slants on comics and collecting, there is considerable overlap now between the coverage of topics of interest to comic lovers.

With the addition of Michael Kronenberg's layouts and 16 pages of full color, I believe *CBM* now has the edge on other periodicals as far as color pages and well-researched articles are concerned. At the same time, I wonder how many of our readers depend on our Market Reports to keep up with trends in the market, and with the advent of the new monthly Overstreet updates, is it redundant for *CBM* to cover the buying and selling issues in a monthly format which is always going to be somewhat "behind the times"?

So, after that long preamble, here's the question of the month for all you readers to react to: What direction should we take now? What changes should be made to make this magazine more enjoyable as we enter the 21st Century? Here are some of my thoughts for you to think about:

I'd like to:

1. Change the name of the magazine to simply *COMICS!*
2. Put less emphasis on analyzing the market.
3. Add significantly more color pages, going to perhaps as many as 48 or 64 pages of full color in each issue, and use these color pages both for well-written articles about comics and for reprinting comic material which is hard to find elsewhere. We could use this new format to actually reprint whole comic books in the public domain.
4. Broaden the scope of the magazine to include everything about the medium of comics from the birth of the art form in the 1800s up to the present.
5. Consider deeper, more scholarly articles about the medium…and paying less attention to minutia like how many buttons Captain Marvel had on his uniform.
6. This new magazine called *COMICS!* could even find its way into mainstream book stores like Barnes and Noble. It could have a square binding like a trade paperback. Issues could be themed, and, by containing less "dated" material, have a longer shelf life. In fact, *COMICS!* could be less of a periodical and more like a series of trade paperbacks.

Yes, we'd still have Michelle Nolan and I think even Bob Harvey might come back. We'd still have letters to the editor.

I need feedback on this. Readers, please let me know how this sounds to you. After all, it's *your* publication…what else can we do to make it more enjoyable for you and more meaningful to our hobby?

Russ Cochran
Editor & Publisher

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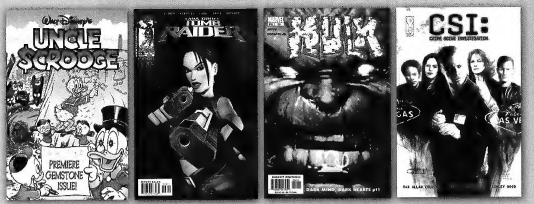

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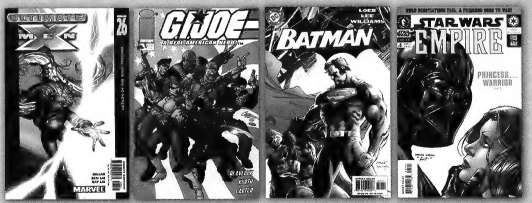

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to the oddball comic column? I saw it in #101, but not #102. Did it get dropped because of lack of room? Please bring that column back. Most of what I collect today would be called oddball.

Again, my compliments on a magazine that fits me.

Bryan Byrd
Davenport, IA

Thank you, Bryan! We get all kinds of letters here at CBM, and yours is our favorite kind!

RC

Anna won...

I can't say how glad I am that I found your magazine. I didn't think there was a publication out there that devoted itself to the history of comics and their related items. I supposed there were others like me that are also interested in the back-story of the medium, but I thought we were too few and far between.

I'm sure that I'd seen *CBM* before, but I figured it would be similar to other magazines I'd looked at, especially those that dealt only with the current market. Imagine my surprise, then, when the first issue I actually thumbed through (#101) opened to a black and white photo of *All Western Winners* #2—a book I had just recently purchased at a small estate auction here in the Midwest.

Then I found that throughout the issue, and the next that I bought, was packed with the information that *I* was interested in, even the articles devoted to the marketplace.

I have to say that my favorite column, from both issues, was "The Greatest Comic Book Ever." That brought back memories of my own greatest comic, which is why I still collect today. Of course I'll never agree on the choices until someone explains to the rest of the world why *Kamandi* #30 is the greatest comic, one which all others are to be measured against.

Only one question—what happened

Anna too...

Wunerful, wunerful, wunerful. That should give you some idea of my age. Regardless, issue 102 was outstanding and before I offer some comments about several articles I'd like to give you some of my thoughts on your publishing efforts and page designs.

1. Here is a vote strongly in support of your retaining the cover logo in its present form. I like the fact it features art appearing inside each issue.

2. The current release schedule is far better than that of the Carter performance. I mark the white envelope with the date received and issue number so I am able to track how close it is to being monthly.

3. The white envelope and cardboard insert, on several occasions, managed to take the brunt of the postal service handling efforts. Both the envelope and cardboard were shredded but by some miracle the magazine was only slightly damaged.

4. I'm sorry to disagree with comments offered earlier by another reader but I like the fact you are willing to reproduce, for our benefit, photos of the writers, artists, editors, etc. accompanying an article. Isn't it sad that apparently, in all fandom, only one photo of Bill Finger is available, the one in which he is wearing a baseball cap? While Steve Ditko prefers to remain away from a camera lens, that's ok for now. But how about a few snapshots of Steve as a young artist and one or two in later years? Our family photo albums numbering in the 50s are preserved for future families to enjoy (I hope) with dates, names and events identified. I loved the Eclipse card photos set made years back and I had hoped some firm would make up another new run for all of fandom to enjoy. Incidentally has anyone out there an extra of cards #64 (Bryan Talbot), #76 (Paul Mavrides) and #87 (Sam Keith) to sell or trade? I haven't been able to find anyone at our local convention that even knows what it is I need.

5. Please don't abandon your efforts to include articles and artwork covering the newspaper strips and their creators. How about *Smilin' Jack*, *Buz Sawyer*, *Kevin the Bold* and *Toonerville Folks* to name just a few.

Issue 102's article by R.C. Harvey covering Bill Mauldin was a great tribute to the artist. I was very moved by this brief biography of a real hero to the GIs and public at home. Excellent in every way.

Michele Nolan's piece, as always, a must read and very informative. To think in all these years of collecting and reading comics there is still more to appreciate in the book other than its cover, story and artwork. She is a very talented writer. Maybe a photo of her someday or have I missed one printed earlier? For all you wise guys out there I'll save you the time of checking the Eclipse cards. She's not in that set.

The Russ Heath interview was well done. I am a western fan and Russ' work on the *Lone Ranger* strip was perfect. I only wish it would have run longer. Years

back I purchased Pure Imagination Publishing's issue 1 of *The Lone Ranger*. It's not listed in *Overstreet* so I don't know if any others were reprinted.

Michael Feldman's article on Lev Gleason and Co. was excellent, informative and frank. The cover color reproductions were eye catching which prompted me to save reading that section and those covering *C.B.* and *Crime Does Not Pay* for last, like the newspaper funnies of old.

I love your magazine and hope I can outlive your publishing run so I don't miss out on anything (I'm 73).

John G. Schreiber
Kingston, NH

Thanks, John! Wow! Two praise letters in a row—now we're on a roll!

RC

Anna tree...

CBM #104 had can't miss written all over it. The History (so to speak) of the Caped Crusader and a link or chain from the beginning to the present had to please the older as well as the younger fans of the Icon. Add in fan favorites Neal Adams, Jim Lee, Jeph Loeb and Frank Miller, what's not to like?

For me this issue began with the rediscovered Schwartz—I thought, "Not another Julie Swartz Tribute"—I couldn't have been more off base or have enjoyed what followed more. Great stuff. Imagine $100 a page for pencils. Nobody in those days was making that kind of money per page of artwork except creators of characters or those running and supplying packages of stories and art that drew as well. We have to have more from Lew (if possible), there was just so much cloak and dagger stuff going down here as hinted at by "The Conditions" and DC finding out about him, more please (I am begging this time).

Next I read the Ghost-Breaker feature and, while I loved the job Michelle did on it, I was saddened when I realized the chances of a feature like this ever re-appearing in any format are virtually zilch, so it's lost to the ages. Quickly, (and back to the star of the show) I liked where Jeph was moving the current Batman but Jim's art seemed a little more fashioned to those who preceded him than the Jim Lee I was accustomed to. As well the Series was colored a lot like it was run at 10 PM , just too many pages of dark colors with night shots, some rationing was required here.

Last, Neal Adams. Again, I loved it, but when I re-read the interview (Part One) clearly there was something more evident that I had missed. In fact, it was like a trail of bread crumbs I was following. It didn't reveal what I expected, but it had to do with the production of the first new Batman hardcover. I checked it out and, true to what Neal said, about half the book was beautifully colored (by Neal?) and yet the last half was very average (in my opinion). The interview asserted that Neal did half the book and Cory did the last half (if I got this right) with suggestions added by Neal as well. It was still a great book and the stories selected for special coloring were more far reaching, more dynamic and complex etc., and probably benefited more from the fuller colors then those in the last half of the book would have. It is still unclear to me who was happier with the colors—DC or Neal and Continuity—and exactly who did what. A good book to have, though. Yet, the mention of the $75 vs. $49 and what, obviously, has produced the first hardcover that looks like halves of different archives editions were printed in the wrong books.

Mike Egan
Ontario Canada

Three in a row! The lion's share of the credit for the excellent Batman features and the new Neal Adams interview goes to our Art Director Michael Kronenberg, who conducted the Adams interview and put together all the Batman features. Good show, Michael!

RC

Former juvenile speaks

Some brief additional information regarding the history of juvenile delinquency in America thanks to research work I did for Max Allan Collins related to an unpublished novel.

Youth gangs as a problem date back to the 1800s—in fact probably were a lot worse than the 1950s. The real gangs that inspired the movie *Gangs of New York* all either had youth affiliates or young members. Capone and the other major mobsters all came up though youth gangs at the turn of the century. The Yellow Kid in many ways was a satire on young children and hooligans in inner city New York.

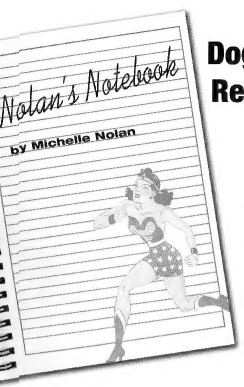
I'm not sure when the term juvenile delinquency came into play—though I believe in the piles here I have a 1930s handbook. Social work to combat both youth gangs and other problems facing young children started in America at least in the 1890s through the settlement houses. One of the more interesting approaches were the Newsboy organizations—essentially the inspiration for Kirby's Newsboy Legion. I have material on the Milwaukee Newsboy group which was started to reduce delinquency among newsboys as well as fights over corners (as depicted in Little Orphan Annie's stint as a newsie in the early days of the strip). Big Little Book, comic book and comic strip artist Erwin Hess got his start as a teen artist working for the Milwaukee Newsboy organization in the 1920s.

My guess is that DC's early work dealing with youth crime came from its advisory board. The advisory board which was created in response to several anti-comics articles and crusades in the early 1940s and included a number of individuals prominent in the fields of social work and juvenile justice.

If they didn't suggest the stories, they undoubtedly were called on for technical assistance when they were created. Thus DC was an early pioneer in translating the term "juvenile delinquency," which would have been used in social work and other professional circles, to popular culture.

George Hagenauer
via e-mail

[continued on page 66]



Dog of Steel, Reader of Whimsy

Now she's done it, you're going to say. "Nolan's Notebook" has finally gone to the dogs.

Well, for this issue, the column does, indeed, go to one dog—Krypto, the Dog of Steel.

During the dawn of the Silver Age, even before Manhunter from Mars, before The Flash, before Challengers of the Unknown, before Green Lantern—heck, even three months before Ace the Bat Hound—there was Krypto.

Yes, it's Krypto, courageous canine from another world, who could chew guns with his bare jaws; leap earth satellites in a single bound; and fetch steel girders with a mighty bark.

Arf! Krypto, DC's first new super-powered character of the fifties!

At age eight, I well remember how puzzled I was by Krypto when I picked up *Adventure Comics* #226 (Jul 1956) during my first few weeks of buying comic books.

Krypto already had made three appearances, all in *Adventure*, but I didn't know that. All I knew, as I opened *Adventure* #226, was that the title on the splash page, "Superboy's Flying Rivals," didn't match the title on the cover, which was "Superboy's Super-Rival," with what looked like a Peter Pan-style character racing Superboy through the sky.

Pretty much every child of that era loved Peter Pan, largely courtesy of Walt Disney's latest version of the character, but Peter Pan seemed like just a minor part of this Superboy story, which began during the Boy of Steel's visit to a new museum of flying legends. Then came a real jolt on page 3: Lana Lang entered the museum, struggling with a dog on a leash, exclaiming "Eek! I—I can't hold Krypto back! After all, he's a Super-Dog!"

What, I asked myself, is a Super-Dog? Where did this mutt come from? What nonsense is this?

In retrospect, of course, it wasn't commercial nonsense at all. Dog stories and films had long been popular with children, and one of the most successful of all the early family TV shows, *Lassie*, began in September of 1954, only three or four months before *Adventure* #210 hit the stands.

But Krypto really seemed over the top, even for a comic book. To that point, I had never seen the appearances of Streak the Wonder Dog in several of the Green Lantern stories of 1948-49, in which Streak was sometimes portrayed with the power of rational thought! Nor was I yet familiar with DC's amusing *Rex the Wonder Dog* bimonthly title, which was still going strong in 1956. But I loved the mighty Yukon King on the Sergeant Preston TV show, not to mention Lassie. Even so, a Super-Dog seemed, well, super strange.

There was no explanation in the story in *Adventure* #226 for this sudden appearance of Krypto, nor was he a big part of the tale until the last two pages. It turned out Krypto had been duped by a mad scientist to help provide deceptive flying feats in what had to be one of the weakest Superboy stories ever written.

It also turned out that Krypto was crushed when he wasn't included in the museum, although that was rectified in the final panel. "I—I was left out of this exhibit! Doesn't my master notice?" Krypto's thought balloon reads shortly after he enters the museum. Yes, a thought balloon!

Krypto did not appear in *Adventure* again until #239 (Aug 1957), which was a much more interesting story. In the meantime, though, Krypto did play roles

Adventure 210 (Mar 1955), first appearance Krypto.

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in 8-page stories in *Superboy* #51 (Sep 1956) and #56 (Apr 1957), both of which helped demystify these canine capers for me. Even so, Krypto did not seem like a significant part of the ongoing Superboy mythos, nor did I have the slightest hint about the unique and historic nature of his character. For that matter, little did I know how significant he would become, with a total of 39 story appearances in the 10-cent era of DC comics, which concluded at the end of 1961.

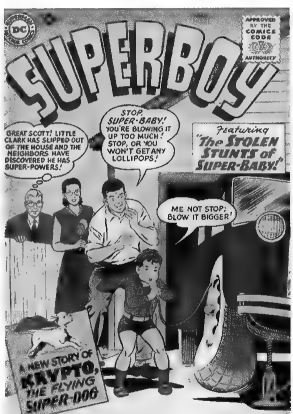
John Hauser, one of my favorite fellows in the comics collecting community—and not coincidentally a dog lover—suggested that I review the early evolution of Krypto. "You can let your column go to the dogs for one issue, Michelle!" he chortled with typical Hauser humor. He even asked for a chronological list of Krypto's early appearances. OK, John, here's a historical bone for you!

After that first encounter with Krypto in *Adventure* #226, it took me several years to discover that the dog's debut came in *Adventure* #210 (Mar 1955), the first Comics Code Authority-approved issue of the title, in "The Superdog from Krypton!" Violence and sex finally may have been proscribed in the comics, but not animals that could fly!

The story, thankfully, has a strong internal logic. In several ways, that logic makes the canine's creation the best of all Krypto stories as Superboy learns that Krypto, too, is a survivor of Krypton. In fact, Superboy discovers that Krypto was rocketed into space as an experiment by Jor-El shortly before Krypton exploded after the infant Superboy was launched into space.

At that time, Krypto's origin was about as original as anything in the history of comics! It was also oddly prescient, because less than three years later, the Soviet Union sent the first living being—a dog—into earth orbit.

Nowhere in Krypto's origin epic is there the slightest hint that he can actually think rationally; there are no Krypto thought balloons. Nor did Krypto seem much different than a normal dog—mentally—so his playful reactions caused Superboy no end of grief, until Krypto took off on a romp into space. He left Superboy wondering if he would ever see his Super-Dog again. (The editors were not consistent; sometimes he was Superdog, sometimes Super-Dog).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ME NOT STOP; BLOW IT BIGGER!
A NEW STORY OF KRYPTO, THE FLYING SUPER-DOG!

Superboy 71 (Mar 1959) also has a tale of Super-Tot!

There is one hilarious scene, after Krypto has inadvertently helped to capture a couple of gun-toting crooks, where Clark Kent thinks: "Now where did that strange dog go? I hear him munching in this alley on bones and…Great Scott! He's chewing one crook's steel gun down, like a tasty dog biscuit!"

Krypto soon scampered back into Superboy's life in *Adventure* #214 (Jul 1955) in "The Dog of Steel!" Ma Kent comes up with a great line when Krypto flies through a window to greet Clark Kent: "Broken glass…mud from another world tracked on my floor…but what's that compared to seeing our son so full of joy, like any other boy and his dog?"

This story introduces Krypto's thought balloons. There is also an amusing panel in which Superboy has posted a sign next to Krypto's doghouse: "Beware of the Super-dog!...Superboy." When crooks find the doghouse, though, they don't realize that the sleepy dog in front of it is really only a double for Krypto, who has flown off. Eventually, Superboy enables both dogs to fool both the bad guys and Lana Lang.

When Krypto flies off into space, Superboy asks, "Leaving, Krypto? Off for a frisk among the stars again?" Earlier in the same story, Superboy used "frisk" as a verb in place of "romp" or "play." DC's editors invented a noun and used a verb incorrectly in the same story, confusing "frisk" with "frisky." It was a super grammatical gaffe!

Krypto's third appearance followed in *Adventure* #220 (Jan 1956) in "The Greatest Show on Earth." It's another decent story, in which Krypto saves Superboy from Kryptonite and they help foil a shady circus boss. Krypto's thought balloons are kept to a minimum.

Krypto started slowly, with only 22 stories in his first five years in *Adventure*

and *Superboy*. Krypto picked up the pace, though, with 17 appearances in the last two years of 10-cent DC titles (1960-61). To put it into another perspective, there were only eight Krypto stories in 1955-57 issues, but 31 tales in the 1958-61 issues.

Obviously, editor Mort Weisinger must have figured Krypto would help sell the books. This, of course, followed Weisinger's ever-increasing pattern of using continuity and a variety of Superman Family characters throughout the 1950s and '60s.

A couple of months after my first, super puzzling encounter with Krypto in *Adventure* #226—his fourth appearance, but his first that was not cover-featured—the playful pooch was back with another non-cover featured story in *Superboy* #51 (Sep 1956). This little 6-pager was entitled "My Super-Pet, Krypto."

"You know all about Superboy, but have you heard of Superdog?" the splash began. Even though there had been a Krypto appearance only two months earlier in *Adventure* #226, this story was important, because it again explained just who Krypto was and where he came from. It was a simple tale in which Krypto saved Superboy from Kryptonite and helped catch a crook, but the story seemed to be a much-needed nod to continuity.

There were more of Krypto's thought-balloons than ever, though, and in retrospect it was obvious that the editors felt the dog had to be portrayed with a super mind as well as powers.

I loved the title of Krypto's next appearance—"A Job for Super-Dog"—in *Superboy* #56 (Apr 1957), which was his sixth appearance overall but only his fourth cover appearance over a 25-month span. The cover was cute and original for the period, showing Superboy saving a youngster from a fire and Krypto saving five puppies.

The story, though, marked a dramatic shift into the world of the wacky. Krypto manages to communicate via a barking code—solved by Superboy's "super concentration"—that he wants to function essentially like Superboy, cape and all, but primarily because he wants to help dogs! "Another thing,

[continued on page 12]

Krypto Appearances in 10-Cent Adventure and Superboy Issues

1. **Adventure** #210 (Mar 1955) – "The Superdog from Krypton"
2. **Adventure** #214 (Jul 1955) – "The Dog of Steel"
3. **Adventure** #220 (Jan 1956) – "The Greatest Show on Earth"
4. **Adventure** #226 (Jul 1956) – "Superboy's Super Rival" (not on cover)
5. **Superboy** #51 (Sep 1956) – "My Super Pet, Krypto" (not on cover)
6. **Superboy** #56 (Apr 1957) – "A Job for Super-Dog"
7. **Adventure** #239 (Aug 1957) – "The Super Tricks of the Dog of Steel"
8. **Adventure** #241 (Oct 1957) – "The Super Outlaw of Smallville" (not on cover)
9. **Superboy** #64 (Apr 1958) – "The Rebel Super-Dog"
10. **Superboy** #67 (Sep 1958) – "The Execution of Krypto" (not on cover)
11. **Adventure** #257 (Feb 1959) – "Superboy Meets the First Two Super Men"
12. **Superboy** #71 (Mar 1959) – "Krypto, the Human Super Dog"
13. **Adventure** #259 (Apr 1959) – "The Blind Boy of Steel" (not on cover)
14. **Superboy** #73 (Jun 1959) – "The Dog-Catcher of Smallville" (not on cover)
15. **Superboy** #74 (Jul 1959) – "Superboy's Voyage to New Krypton" (cameo)
16. **Adventure** #262 (Jul 1959) – "The Colossal Super-Dog"
17. **Superboy** #75 (Sep 1959) – "How Krypto Made History"
18. **Adventure** #264 (Sep 1959) – "The Helpless Hero" (cameo, not on cover)
19. **Superboy** #76 (Oct 1959) – "The Biggest Baby in Smallville" (cameo)
20. **Adventure** #265 (Oct 1959) – "The First Superman Robot" (not on cover)
21. **Adventure** #266 (Nov 1959) – "The Super Pranks of Superdog"
22. **Superboy** #77 (Dec 1959) – "The Space Adventures of Krypto"
23. **Adventure** #268 (Jan 1960) – "The Week Clark Kent Lost His Memory"
24. **Adventure** #269 (Feb 1960) – "Superdog's Mean Master"
25. **Superboy** #79 (Mar 1960) – "Life on Krypton"
26. **Superboy** #80 (Apr 1960) – "The Smartest Boy in Town" (not on cover)
27. **Adventure** #272 (May 1960) – "Krypto, the Super-Star of Hollywood"
28. **Superboy** #82 (Jul 1960) – "The War Against Superboy" (Bizarro Krypto on cover)
29. **Superboy** #83 (Sep 1960) – "The Dreams of Doom"
30. **Adventure** #277 (Oct 1960) – "Superboy's Greatest Duel"
31. **Adventure** #278 (Nov 1960) – "Supergirl in Smallville" (not on cover)
32. **Superboy** #87 (Mar 1961) – "Krypto's First Romance" (Kolli on cover)
33. **Superboy** #87 (Mar 1961) – "The Scarlet Jungle of Krypton" (not on cover)
34. **Adventure** #284 (May 1961) – "Clark Kent Goes to Reform School"
35. **Adventure** #285 (Jun 1961) – "Gravity Girl of Smallville"
36. **Superboy** #89 (Jun 1961) – "The Super Cop of Smallville" (not on cover)
37. **Superboy** #90 (Jul 1961) – "The Girl Who Saw the Future Superboy" (not on cover)
38. **Superboy** #91 (Sep 1961) – "The Super Hungry Super Heroes"
39. **Superboy** #92 (Oct 1961) – "Krypto's Arch Enemy" (13 pages)

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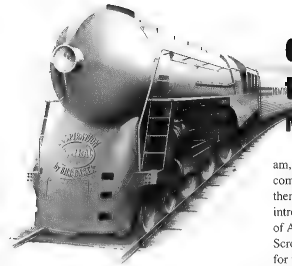


Caught Between the Ridiculous and the Sublime

Mike Grell on his influences and inspirations

Interview conducted by Bill Baker

After getting his break in the business during the early '70s as a background artist for Dale Messick on Brenda Starr, *Mike Grell soon found his way to New York and the offices of Julie Schwartz. Asked "What the hell makes you think you can draw comics?" by that mainstay of DC Comics, Grell simply opened his portfolio and demanded of the editor, "You tell me." That boldness, which resulted in his being given his first comics work, has not only served this writer-artist well over the years, it could even be argued that it has become his calling card.*

Whether you're looking at his seminal art for The Legion of Super-Heroes, *the break-out fantasy epic* Warlord, *one of his creator-owned projects like* Jon Sable, Freelance, *or his more recent, sadly truncated run as writer of* Iron Man *for Marvel, Grell's work displays a penchant for breakneck action peppered with keen characterization and pitch-perfect storytelling. All of which makes quite a bit of sense when you learn where the sources of his earliest, and perhaps most telling, influences lie.*

Comic Book Marketplace: You've mentioned in past interviews that you read stacks of comics that your dad had saved from the World War II era. Is that how you first discovered comics?

Mike Grell: Well, certainly led along by my older brothers. I have two brothers, four and five years older than I am, and I imagine a good share of those comics eventually came down from them. Or from the Rochon sisters, who introduced me to the wonders and glories of Archie and Donald Duck and Uncle Scrooge. I never properly thanked them for that. We used to swap comics back and forth. I would always buy the blood and thunder books, and they would buy the more humorous stuff, and it took me a few years to understand how great the Uncle Scrooge stuff was because, of course, Carl Barks in his heyday was doing that work. We just really enjoyed that kind of stuff.

When I was a kid, the newspaper comic strips were a family event. Dad used to read *Alley Oop*, and put voices to everybody. In fact, my dad always reminded me somewhat of Alley Oop. He had the same perennial five o'clock shadow, and he was a lumberjack who, at a height of all of five foot seven, had arms that would dwarf Arnold Schwarzenegger's. There were a lot of similarities, and he was just a really great guy with a terrific sense of humor.

We would sit around the table and, when I was little, Dad used to read the funnies to me. And, of course, Sunday morning when the papers came, we'd fight over who got what, and lie on the living room floor and read the comics over and over and over again. My mother's favorite was *Prince Valiant*, and Dad's, of course, was *Alley Oop*. I kind of fell somewhere between the ridiculous and the sublime. I always looked at *Prince Valiant* with amazement, and I still like *Steve Canyon*, and *Blondie*, and, especially, *Li'l Abner*. Probably for the girls. [General laughter]

Somebody asked Al Capp once why he always drew his women large

PHOTO BY RANDY Z. MIEREMAN

Grell, ready for action.

breasted, and I've got to admit that, as I've gotten older, I kind of agree with him. When somebody just asked me why I always drew women with big boobs, I said, "Women with big boobs are more fun to draw than women with small boobs. That's all there is to it."

CBM: Is there anything else that contributed to your love of adventure and comedy stories? Were there any novelists that you read when you were younger who caught your attention?

Grell: Oh, yeah. The first full length novel that I read was *Tarzan the Terrible*, sort of jumping in the middle of it, and I was probably seven. Might have been eight, but I was probably seven. I was pretty much hooked from there.

I grew up in an area of northern Wisconsin where we did not have television. We had radio, so we learned to use our imagination to create pictures in our minds. And Edgar Rice Burroughs was certainly a visual writer.

And from there it sort of sprang outward. I read Jules Verne and Mickey Spillane. I discovered Mickey Spillane when I was a teenager, and thought that was an interesting approach to a lot of things. I've gone back and read his stuff in more recent years, and I'm sometimes astounded by the simplicity of it. But I'm also intrigued by the reflection of the times. You can read the early Mike Hammer stuff…and you can detect exactly what society was like, what the view of the roles of men and women were then. We're talking about the Doris Day era, when women were, more or less, housewives, and a woman who could be a deadly adversary was something fairly new and unique. And then, of course, Ian Fleming, and onward from there.

CBM: Was it just the general sense of wonder that imbued this work that grabbed your imagination?

Grell: Oh, absolutely. We didn't have the visual input of television and video games that kids have today to desensitize us from the wonders of an imagination. When you read words that were put together to evoke a visual sense, it was that writer, that storyteller taking you to a different world, a different place, and it was a combination of what he put on paper and what your own mind conjured. And that, to me, was just magical. Kids who don't get the opportunity to exercise that form of personal creativity by reading books are really losing out on something. It's really unfortunate.

Of course, it's the combination of those things that makes doing comics so much fun. I get to write the words, I get to draw the pictures, and get to *cast* the characters. I get to dress them up. I get to create the worlds they live in, and then I get to all but act out the story.

Nolan's Notebook

[continued from page 10]

Krypto…you may make mistakes without my guidance!" Superboy says. "After all, you're only a dog!"

"Aw, I won't get into trouble…and I won't change my mind!" Krypto thinks. But the Dog of Steel does make mistakes, learns his lesson, and returns to a partnership with Superboy—but the series is pretty well fractured when it comes to internal logic. At the time, I thought this story was pretty silly—but now, nearly half a century later, I like the whimsical approach.

When Krypto finally shows up again in *Adventure #239*—his seventh appearance overall—his encounter with a meteor turns him into a talking dog! This being 1957, of course, one of the first things Krypto does is record a song in a studio. Much to Superboy's astonishment, he hears "You ain't nothing but a hound dog, cryin' all the time…you ain't never caught a rabbit…"—thankfully, there were no more lyrics portrayed!

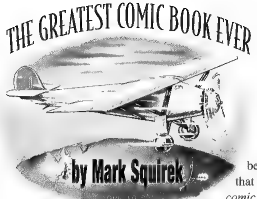
"Beautiful, isn't it?...I recorded it myself!" Krypto tells Superboy. "Whatever money it makes I'm donating to the Society for Homeless Dogs!" To which Superboy thinks: "Oh, no!"

At the end of the tale, in which Krypto helps foil crooks, save Superboy and preserve radium for people who need it, Superboy tells his super pet that his talking time is about up. What does Superboy do? He carves a special canyon in which Krypto is invited to preserve his voice for 100 years, and the dog responds with, "A Super-Dog's best friend is Superboy!"

"Any time you want, you can come back…and hear yourself!" Superboy tells Krypto, to which he responds, "Yip, yip!"

As I recall, readers either loved Krypto or thought he ruined an otherwise "serious" approach to the stories, since DC's stories tended to be less whimsical than Fawcett's Captain Marvel tales.

Hoping I haven't landed in the doghouse, so to speak, with too many readers, you can save your barks about this topic for John Hauser.



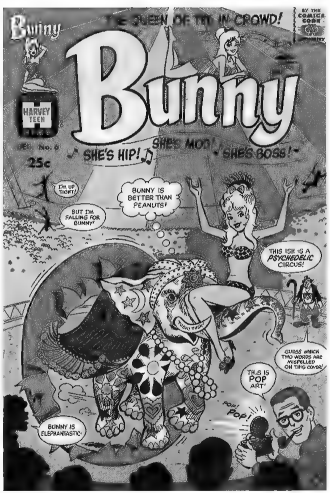
"Bunny" #6

The psychedelic Sixties struck everyone in a strange and unusual way. Television tried as hard as they could to capitalize on the new generation of viewers. From the *Monkees* to *Laugh-In*, the powers that be at the networks struggled hard to stay on top of what they saw happening around them. Many comic publishers were also struggling to figure out exactly what was going on in the minds of America's youth.

Marvel was probably the first to realize that if you spoke the same language as your audience, you were ahead of the game. DC was unsure about how to portray the youth of the day, but eventually you started to hear the Teen Titans using words like "gear" and "fab." Over at Harvey, just like any other media outlet, they were trying to figure out how to hold on to their audience. Since the majority of their titles at the time were directed at children, the next logical step would be to offer a book that was directed at the kid who had just stopped reading "Wendy."

This is where I come in. My parents owned a camper. One thing my parents wanted to do was to make sure that their children traveled a lot. Since their five kids were too young to ship off with a Eur-rail pass, they would pile us in the back of the camper. Once the vacation destination was decided, my parents would then determine which of their five children would accompany them on the adventure of a lifetime. As my family made its way to various predetermined points on the map, whoever didn't get left at Grandma's was able to travel in relative luxury. The bed that rested above the truck's cab was big enough to almost become a fort. This would be a fort that was stocked with candy, gum and *comic books*. The problem was that, according to the rules of my Father's house, you could only take so many comic books with you. It had something to do with the ratio of the weight of a comic book to the total mass of the tires as the truck hit a Colorado weigh station. For the record, my father considered Big Little Books the same as comics. (So does eBay.) If you are lucky, your sister likes you and she will take a few extras to help you with your reading needs. Since it was pretty hard to slip any super-hero books past my sister, she took responsibility for the Archie and Harvey inventory.

So one summer my sister, parents and I (the three other boys had been left to spend the time at Grandma's farm) set out for the biggest trip imaginable. Stocked with *World's Finest*, *Batmans* and my sister's Harveys, we were going to California! Not only that, but, we were going to go there the long way and then drive back home real fast. My father always drove back real fast. Going there was OK with him, but the minute you got where you were going, he would hop right back in the truck and floor it straight for home. We stayed at campgrounds across the country, and every campground had the same store. It offered the same things in every place—canned goods, junk food, two-year-old magazines and lots of soda pop and crackers. There was one place in Indiana that was different than the others. They actually had current books, magazines and comics.



Well, I immediately decided that my father was going to buy me a paperback compilation of Hatlo's *They'll Do It Every Time*, but I wanted a couple of comics also, so it was up to me to convince my sister to get something I wanted. I cajoled and begged and whined *[continued on page 21]*

CARBON DATING THE END OF DC's SILVER AGE

by Dave Blanchard

SUPERGIRL starring in...
Adventure
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15¢
SEPT.
NO. 397
CAN YOU GUESS WHICH NEW COSTUME SUPERGIRL WILL CHOOSE? IF NOT...
..FOLLOW HER AND HER TWO MYSTERY GUESTS IN HER BATTLE AGAINST...
THE TERROR THAT STALKS STANHOPE CAMPUS--THE EVIL SECRET OF AND SEE IF YOU GUESSED RIGHT!

#397 (Sep 1970): Supergirl ponders what to wear to the Silver Age wrap party.

When exactly did the Silver Age end for DC Comics, the company that launched the Age back in 1956 with the publication of *Showcase* #4? Overstreet cites 1969 as the end-point, which if you take this literally means that all comic books cover-dated January 1970 or later are post-Silver Age. However, so many end-of-the-Silver Age events occurred in 1970 that a December 1969 cut-off date seems not only purely arbitrary, but downright wrong. Consider, for instance, that in 1970 Mort Weisinger retired from DC Comics; Jack Kirby left Marvel and returned to DC; O'Neil and Adams started their Green Lantern/Green Arrow series; the long-running Batman-Superman team-ups in *World's Finest* were halted; and *Tomahawk* became Son of *Tomahawk*.

Clearly, some important titles were still very much a part of the Silver Age past the December 1969 end date. Looking just at the above examples, a case could be made that Overstreet should cut the Silver Age off at 1970, not 1969. However, that only tells us half the story, since a large number of DC's titles had already ended their Silver Age runs well before December 1969.

The reality of the situation is, DC's Silver Age didn't just end at any arbitrarily-chosen point in time. The first glimmer that the Silver Age was coming to an end came as early as 1967, when *Flash* and *Batman* artist Carmine Infantino was promoted to editorial director, other artists (Orlando, Giordano, Sekowsky, Kubert) were named editors, and the closed-shop approach used by the remaining editors was opened up. As a result, Andru and Esposito started drawing *Flash*, Irv Novick took over *Lois Lane*, Dick Dillin replaced Sekowsky on *JLA*, etc.

Meanwhile, a number of long-time DC writers—including Gardner Fox and John Broome, the two leading architects of the Silver Age, as well as Arnold Drake, Bill Finger, Otto Binder and France Herron—left DC for various reasons.

Another factor was the precipitous drop in popularity of the *Batman* TV show, which had spurred phenomenal sales of super-hero comics across the board at the height of the Silver Age, but by 1968 threatened to be an albatross that would sink DC's entire super-hero lineup.

#217 (Dec 1969): His TV show canceled and his youthful ward off to college, Batman decides to relocate.

#242 (Aug/Sep 1968) After a bizarre spin as costumed super-heroes, the Black Knights make a very brief return.

And consider as well the influx of creative talent from Charlton in the late 1960s, such as Steve Ditko, Jim Aparo, Denny O'Neil, Steve Skeates and editor Dick Giordano to DC. Consider the early efforts of the likes of Mike Friedrich, Len Wein, Marv Wolfman and Cary Bates, a new generation of fans-turned-writers. And certainly consider the impact of Neal Adams, who redefined what "comic book art" represented.

Blessed with the gift of hindsight, today we can look back and easily point to the changes that rang down the curtain on the Silver Age. Back in the late 1960s, though, who could have guessed that perhaps the most significant event for DC Comics would be Joe Orlando's revamping of *House of Mystery* from a super-hero to an EC-like horror comic. *HOM* had been a fringe title at best in 1968, with its "Dial H for H.E.R.O." and "J'onn J'onnz, Manhunter from Mars" features. However, with EC alumnus Orlando at the helm (and inspired in part by Warren's successful black-and-white line of comic magazines), *House of Mystery* was to become the four-color harbinger of the next "age" of comics, the Weird Age, which, as I described in my previous article, "Beginning the Bronze Age of Comics" (*CBM* #86, Oct 2001), was a brief interregnum period between the Silver Age and the Bronze Age, which began in 1975 with the publication of Marvel's *Giant-Size X-Men* #1 (for the record, DC's first Bronze Age comic debuted later that same year, with *All Star Comics* #58).

As a corollary to the reemergence of horror/mystery comics, another key event signaling the end of the Silver Age—one which often goes unnoticed—was the

THE CHART: Tracking the final Silver Age issue numbers for all of DC's regularly published adventure titles.1967-68: The most significant title to be revamped during this period was **House of Mystery**, which jump-started DC's Weird Age.

LAST SILVER AGE	NOVEMBER 67	DEC 67	JANUARY 68	FEB 68	MARCH 68	APRIL 68	MAY 68	JUNE 68
	Lois Lane 79		Our Army at War 188 Superboy 144 Tales of the Unexpected 104		Star Spangled War Stories 137	House of Mystery 173 Metamorpho 17		Plastic Man 10

#85 (Aug/Sep 1969): The new Green Arrow makes his debut.

#69 (Aug/Sep 1969): With Prof temporarily dead, Corinna Stark applies for the vacant Challenger position.

wholesale slaughter of humor comics. The purge began in the late 1960s, with the cancellation of the long-running *Adventures of Bob Hope*, and by the end of 1971 every last one of them was gone: *Angel and The Ape*/*Meet Angel*, *Binky*, *Binky's Buddies*, *A Date With Debbi*, *Debbi's Dates*, *Stanley & His Monster* (which had continued the numbering of the classic *Fox & Crow*), *Swing With Scooter*, *Three Mouseketeers*, *Windy & Willy*, and even the venerable *Adventures of Jerry Lewis* and *Sugar & Spike*. Not a single one was left on the stands (although, curiously, a couple of them had brief one-issue "revivals" in 1972, undoubtedly for some legal or postal regulation reason).

Even DC's romance comics were affected by this evolving Weird Age, as long-running titles such as *Girl's Romances* and *Secret Hearts* were canceled, to be replaced by the likes of *Dark Mansion of Forbidden Love* and *Sinister House of Secret Love*, a short-lived experimentation with full-length gothic romances.

When Comic Books Stopped Being "Comic"

Basically, the best yardstick for determining the end of a DC title's Silver Age run is to identify when the "comic" went out of the comic book. That quirky style of storytelling derided as camp was methodically stomped out of every last title, in favor of a straight-faced seriousness that spawned a brief era of "relevance" in the late 1960s and early '70s: Green Arrow lost his fortune and became an outspoken voice for the down-trodden. *Star Spangled War Stories* dropped the dinosaur-populated "War That Time Forgot" feature in favor of "Enemy Ace," a sympathetic look at war from the other side. The Metal Men became outcasts and adopted human identities. Tomahawk's young son Hawk took over his old man's title. Superboy's foster parents lost about 20 years of aging. The JLA fought against pollution and starvation, rather than Amos Fortune and Dr. Light. Robin went off to college. Everywhere you looked, the times they were a-changin'.

This article will attempt to establish cut-off dates for all of DC's Silver Age super-hero and adventure titles. My contention is that every DC title published between the years 1968-1971 had a significant shift of one sort or another that we can use to pinpoint a changeover to a new direction (the only exceptions being those titles that were canceled instead of revamped).

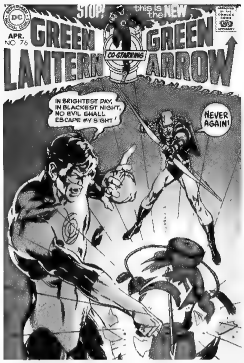
The evidence is compelling, and it's all there if you know where and how to look for it. For instance, the word "New" shows up everywhere: "The New Adventures of" *Superman*; "Diana Prince, the New" *Wonder Woman*; "The New" *Green Lantern*/Green Arrow;" "The New" *Jimmy Olsen* and "The New Hunted" *Metal Men* to name just a few.

These revamps did not all happen at the exact same time, of course, and sometimes the logic behind the sequence of changeovers is perplexing. For instance, Lois Lane, Jimmy Olsen and Superboy were all revamped before Superman. While Morgan Edge was taking over the *Daily Planet* in *Jimmy Olsen*, editor Weisinger's last couple of issues of *Superman* featured an imaginary story pitting Super Luthor versus Killer Kent. In fact, for all intents and purposes, *Superman* #233 (Jan 1971)—editor Schwartz's first issue—closes the door on the Silver Age, at least for DC. (I'll leave it to somebody else to catalog the end dates for the other comics publishers.)

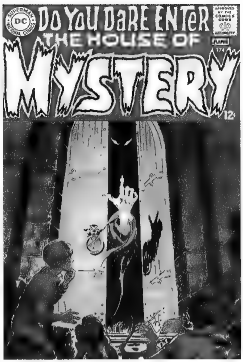
The methodology I used began with

JULY 68	AUGUST 68	SEPTEMBER 68	OCTOBER 68	NOV 68	DEC 68	JAN 69	FEBRUARY 69
Blackhawk 241 Metal Men 32	Wonder Woman 177	Atom 38 Hawkman 27 JLA 65	Doom Patrol 121				Strange Adventures 216

putting each and every DC title under the microscope to determine: (1) what qualities the title was best known for throughout its Silver Age run, and (2) identifying a specific issue when that title veered off in a new direction. To keep the list at a reasonable length, we will consider only those titles that were launched before 1967, and that lasted at least until 1968. I have excluded humor and romance comics from the discussion, although there are some definite stylistic end-of-the-Silver Age shifts in those titles as well (e.g., *Swing With Scooter* dropped its lightweight adventurous tone to become strictly an Archie-clone circa issue 16).



#76 (Apr 1970): One of the most memorable covers in comics history.



#174 (May/Jun 1968): House of Mystery leaves the Silver Age behind and opens the door on DC's Weird Age.

End-Points for DC's Silver Age Titles

Action Comics is one of the few DC Silver Age comics without a dramatic change. The final Silver Age issue was #392 (Sep 1970), the last edited by Mort Weisinger and the last to feature the Legion of Super-Heroes as a backup feature. The lead Superman feature didn't change substantially under new editor Murray Boltinoff, who continued publishing imaginary stories on a regular basis.

Adventure Comics #396 (Aug 1970) was editor Weisinger's last issue; issue 397 (Sep 1970) began the Mike Sekowsky era and opened with Supergirl deciding on a new costume. She would soon be confounded by on-again, off-again power outages.

Aquaman, in a perfect world, would have been canceled with issue #54 (Nov/Dec 1970). However, as it is, *Aquaman* took its Silver Age further into the 1970s than any other DC title, managing to even outlast *Superman* #233 (see below), the "official" breakpoint for DC's Silver Age. The Skeates/Aparo/Giordano team remained intact up through the final issue, so *Aquaman*'s Silver Age run ended with #56 (Mar/Apr 1971).

The Atom was canceled with issue #38 (Aug/Sep 1968), whereupon it was combined with another canceled long-time Silver Age title, *Hawkman*, to become *Atom & Hawkman* (see below).

The Atom & Hawkman, a combo title incorporating *The Atom* and *Hawkman*, was canceled with issue #45 (Oct/Nov 1969).

Batman's Silver Age ended at issue 216 (Nov 1969); in #217 (Dec 1969), Robin went off to college and Batman closed off the Batcave and set up shop in a downtown Gotham City penthouse. The break-up of the Batman-and-Robin team is one of the seminal events of the post-Silver Age era, serving as a clear signal to the readers that the campy days of the *Batman* TV show era were over.

Blackhawk had by far the shortest post-Silver Age run before it got canceled: a mere two issues. Following the "New Era," where the Blackhawks all adopted super-hero identities, the decision was made to restore them to their original costumes. This brief back-to-basics storyline began with issue 242 (Aug/Sep 1968); thus, the final Silver Age issue was #241 (Jun/Jul 1968).

The Brave and the Bold had no real

1969: Towards the end of 1969, DC wiped the Bat-slate clean by breaking up the Dynamic Duo. Meanwhile, even combined into one title, The Atom and Hawkman were no longer popular enough to support their own comic.

MAR 69	APR 69	MAY 69	JUN 69	JULY 69	AUG 69	SEPTEMBER 69	OCT 69	NOV 69	DEC 69
				Brave & Bold 84 Challengers of the Unknown 68		G.I. Combat 137		Atom & Hawkman 45 Batman 216 Detective 393	Our Fighting Forces 122 Teen Titans 24

#33 (Aug/Sep 1968): The New Meta. Men go hunting for better sales.

SUPERBOY
MAR
SON...I CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT I SEE IN THE MIRROR YOU MUST CHANGE US BACK TO NORMAL!
HOW CAN I TELL MOM AND DAD THAT THE CHANGE IS... PERMANENT!?
YES, READERS, FROM THIS DAY ON, SUPERBOY'S PARENTS WILL LIVE WITH
THE HOWLING TREES!

#145 (Mar 1968): What a difference 20 years make for Ma and Pa Kent.

continuity between the issues, but the consensus opinion is that the changeover occurred with Neal Adams' artistic redefinition of Batman as the Dark Knight rather than the wisecracking caped crusader. The one *B&B* issue that, more than any other, signaled the end of the Silver Age was #85 (Aug/Sep 1969), which featured the first appearance of the new Green Arrow, who would shortly become, in the pages of *JLA* and *Green Lantern*, the character who best personified DC's "relevant" post-Silver Age phase. *B&B* #84 (Jun/Jul 1969), then, is the final Silver Age issue.

Challengers of the Unknown #69 (Aug/Sep 1969) saw a lot of changes: Prof was apparently killed, Corinna Stark was introduced as the "new Challenger," and by the end of the story, the remaining Challs decided to adopt new costumes. Therefore, *COTU* #68 (Jun/Jul 1969) is the final Silver Age issue.

Detective Comics #393 (Nov 1969) was the last Silver Age issue; #394 (Dec 1969) continued the solo Batman storyline begun in *Batman* #217 (see above).

The Doom Patrol #121 (Sep/Oct 1968) was not only the final issue of this title, but it actually featured the deaths of the entire Doom Patrol. They literally went out with a bang.

The Flash #199 (Aug 1970) was the final Silver Age issue for the character that literally launched the Silver Age in *Showcase* #4 (Sep/Oct 1956). The changeover in issue 200 (Sep 1970) was that Irv Novick began drawing the series. Novick remained on the title for most of the 1970s, with his tenure ranking second in longevity only to Infantino's.

G.I. Combat #138 (Oct/Nov 1969) saw the introduction of the Losers, which ultimately became the longest-running war feature introduced during the post-Silver Age (see *Our Fighting Forces* below), so the final Silver Age *G.I. Combat* was issue 137 (Aug/Sep 1969).

Green Lantern #75 (Mar 1970) was the last issue produced by the long-running Silver Age team of Broome and Kane. The next issue, *GL* #76 (Apr 1970), is one of the most famous and frequently reprinted comics of all time, the beginning of the O'Neil/Adams Green Lantern/Green Arrow series. The cover alone, with Green Arrow shattering GL's power battery, seems to scream out, "The Silver Age is OVER!"

Hawkman was canceled with issue 27 (Aug/Sep 1968), whereupon it joined up with *The Atom* in a new combo title called *The Atom & Hawkman* (see above).

House of Mystery #173 (Mar/Apr 1968) was the final Silver Age issue, and the last to include the "Dial H for H.E.R.O." and "J'onn J'onzz, Manhunter from Mars" series. Though composed mainly of reprints, *House of Mystery* #174 (May/Jun 1968) helped launch DC's new line of horror comics, under the editorship of erstwhile EC artist Joe Orlando. Within a few years, DC would be publishing close to 20 different mystery/horror comics, as the Weird Age followed immediately on the heels of the Silver Age.

Justice League of America #65 (Sep 1968) was the last issue written by Gardner Fox, the architect of DC's parallel Earths and one of the two writers (the other being John Broome) most frequently associated with DC's Silver Age characters. Fittingly, Fox's final *JLA*

JAN 70	FEB 70	MARCH 70	APR 70	MAY 70	JUN 70	JUL 70	AUGUST 70	SEPTEMBER 70	OCTOBER 70
		Green Lantern 75					Adventure 369 Flash 199	Action 392 Showcase 93 Jimmy Olsen 132	Tomahawk 130

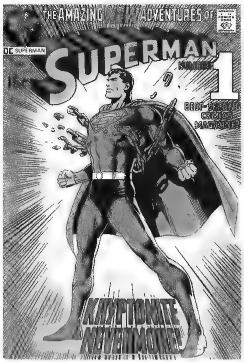
story features yet another Golden Age character revival, the Red Tornado.

Metal Men #32 (Jun/Jul 1968) was the last Silver Age appearance of the happy-go lucky robots; with issue #33 (Aug/Sep 1968), Bob Kanigher along with artist Mike Sekowsky began telling the adventures of the "New Hunted Metal Men "

Metamorpho #17 (Mar/Apr 1968) was this title's final issue.

Our Army at War, alone among DC's Silver Age titles, doesn't appear to have any clearly identifiable cutoff issue, which is not that surprising considering that Robert Kanigher wrote just about every Sgt Rock story for 30 years. The only significant "change" for this title in the late 1960s was Joe Kubert replacing Kanigher as editor, but unlike most editorial changes of the period, Sgt. Rock went pretty much unaffected. For want of a better choice, I've chosen to cut off *OAAW* at issue 188 (Jan 1968); The Teen-age Underground Fighters of Unit 3 made their first appearance in #189 (Feb 1968). I invite input from the Sgt. Rock experts out there who may have a better candidate for a cutoff issue, if indeed there is one. Like Rock always used to say, nothin's ever easy with Easy.

Our Fighting Forces, fortunately, is much easier to pinpoint than *Our Army at War* (see above). *OFF*'s final Silver Age issue was #122 (Nov/Dec 1969). "The Losers" feature began with #123 (Jan/Feb 1970), and continued until the title's cancellation in 1978.



#233 (Jan 1971): DC saves its biggest revamp for last with the Amazing New Adventures of Superman.

#80 (Jan 1968): Lois kicks Superman out of her magazine (although he never really leaves, the big lug).

Plastic Man #10 (May/Jun 1968) was this title's final issue.

Showcase was the birthplace of the Silver Age, back in 1956, and thus by definition it remained a Silver Age title until its cancellation with issue 93 (Sep 1970), the final installment of Mike Sekowsky's three-part "Manhunter 2070" feature.

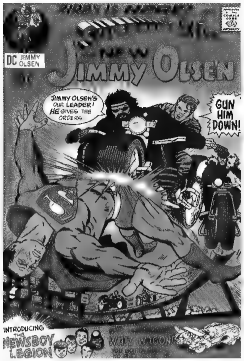
Star Spangled War Comics #137 (Feb/Mar 1968) was the last appearance of the "War that Time Forgot;" replacing the dinosaurs in issue #138 (Apr/May 1968) was Enemy Ace.
Strange Adventures #216 (Jan/Feb 1969) was the last Deadman issue; the following issue, #217 (Mar/Apr 1969), saw the title go to all-reprints of Adam Strange and other Schwartz-edited science fiction series of the 1950s and '60s.

Superboy #144 (Jan 1968) was the last Silver Age issue; #145 (Mar 1968) saw the rejuvenation of Ma and Pa Kent as 40-somethings, rather than 60-somethings, presumably to liven up the plot opportunities by making the Kents appear less stodgy.

Superman #232 (Dec 1970/Jan 1971), a 64-page giant, was the final Silver Age issue. *Superman* #233 (Jan 1971) represented DC's irrevocable break with the Silver Age: Julius Schwartz replaced Mort Weisinger as editor of DC's flagship title, Kryptonite was eliminated, Morgan Edge bought out the *Daily Planet* and made Clark Kent a TV reporter, Swan and Anderson began a

1970-71: DC rang down the curtain on the Silver Age during this period, led by the O'Neill/Adams Green Lantern and the O'Neil/Swan/Anderson Superman. Kirby's return to DC was the final nail in the Silvery Coffin.

NOVEMBER 70	DEC 70	JANUARY 71	FEB 71	MAR 71	APRIL 71	
World's Finest 197		Superman 232			Aquaman 56	THE END



#133 (Oct 1970): Kirby shakes things up a little, having Jimmy gun down Superman. Some pal.

#178 (Sep/Oct 1968): Diana Prince goes mod, ditching both her fatigues and her Amazon outfit.

memorable run on the title as an artistic team, and Denny O'Neil continued the down-to-earth characterizations and themes he'd already honed to an art form with Green Lantern. Batman and Wonder Woman. DC acknowledged the break with the Silver Age with two-page center-spread ads throughout all its January 1971 titles, proclaiming "A New Year brings a New Beginning for Superman 1971."

Superman's Girl Friend Lois Lane had an abrupt, eye-catching cover on issue 80 (Jan 1968), where Lois rips the words "GIRL FRIEND" out of the logo, and yells, "Get out of my magazine, Superman! I'm leaving Metropolis to start a new life...one that doesn't include you!" The breakup didn't last, of course, but the more mature approach to the Lois/Superman relationship did, and within a couple of issues, Irv Novick replaced long-time *Lois Lane* artist Kurt Schaffenberger. The final Silver Age *Lois Lane*, then, was issue 79 (Nov 1967), making it the earliest DC comic to shift out of Silver Age mode.

Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen #132 (Sep 1970) is one of those no-brainers when determining a final Silver Age issue; in issue 133 (Oct 1970) the cover proclaimed, "Superman's Ex-Pal, the New Jimmy Olsen," as Jack Kirby unleashed his imagination on the title and got his Fourth World series off and running.

Tales of the Unexpected #104 (Dec 1967/Jan 1968) was the last issue to bear that title. The following issue, #105 (Feb/Mar 1968), the name was changed to simply *The Unexpected*, whereupon it abandoned its science fiction storylines and began concentrating on mystery/horror. In actuality, the transition wasn't quite that smooth, as *The Unexpected* didn't become a full-fledged horror comic until after Orlando's revamped *House of Mystery* (see above) proved the vitality of this genre.

Teen Titans #24 (Nov/Dec 1969) was this title's final Silver Age issue; Mr. Jupiter is introduced in issue 25 (Jan/Feb 1970), as *Teen Titans* made a clean break from its happy-go-lucky, slang-filled early issues.

Tomahawk #130 (Sep/Oct 1970) is the cutoff issue for this long-running title's Silver Age tenure; with the following issue, #131 (Nov/Dec 1970), Tomahawk married and had two sons, the older of whom—Hawk, Son of Tomahawk—got cover billing and took over as the main character.

Wonder Woman #177 (Jul/Aug 1968) was the last Silver Age issue. The following issue, #178 (Sep/Oct 1968), saw the beginning of the non-costumed Diana Prince storyline, which saw Diana forsake her powers and team up with I-Ching, while Steve Trevor died (though he got better later).

World's Finest Comics #197 (Oct/Nov 1970) was a giant-sized collection of team-up adventures featuring Superman and Batman; with the next issue, #198 (Nov 1970), Schwartz replaced Weisinger as editor and promptly dropped Batman from the team as *WF* became a Superman team-up book, mirroring *Brave & Bold* as a Batman team-up book. The idea didn't really catch on, though, and within a couple years Batman was back full time. In 1978, DC started from scratch on a new Superman team-up title, and had much more success with *DC Comics Presents*.

The Silver Age's Last Gasp

DC also had a number of short-lived adventure series that were launched in 1967-1968—representing the Silver Age's last gasp of creativity—and all were canceled by 1969. Given their brief lives and the time frame in which they were published, their entire runs encompass the Silver Age. For the record, here are their final issues:

Anthro *#6 (Jul/Aug 1969)*
Bat Lash *#7 (Oct/Nov 1969)*
Beware the Creeper *#6 (Mar/Apr 1969)*

[continued on page 67]

Greatest Comic Book Ever

[continued from page 13]

and then it was finally decided that she would get Dad to buy her a comic book instead of a coloring book.

With my father at the register and ready to go, she did the unthinkable. Despite my best laid plans, she passed right by the *Brave and Bold* team-up book I had set at the very front of the rack (to help her in her decision-making process), and she went straight for *Bunny* #6. I should have foreseen this. It was a Harvey book.

I was still mad when we got to the Grand Canyon. As we traveled Route 66, I would occasionally hear Marilu laugh at something, but she would not share it with me. This was *her* comic book and I had my own.

Eventually, my anger subsided and Marilu got bored with *Bunny*. So, through sheer unpalatable boredom, I was forced to read this crummy girl's book. The cover had enough bad puns to alienate anyone and, even though I secretly imagined myself as becoming the best pun-master in junior high, I was still embarrassed by their lameness. At least it looked like it had something to do with *Laugh-In*, so maybe it wouldn't be that bad.

As I laid above the cab of the truck, lounging in pre-teen luxury, I began to see that *Bunny* was a lot different than the other "kids" books I had read. This was about teenagers! As I read through the pages I began to imagine myself as a hip young man with a groovy model girlfriend. Suddenly, this book had possibilities. The art seemed to be a bit more "adult" than the other Harveys I had been forced to read. (Despite my sister's love of Harveys, I only read them while waiting at the dentist's office—so I could have possibly been subconsciously associating Harveys with tremendous dental pain at this time.)

The very first panels actually made me feel comfortable. As Bunny is walking into the circus with her pipe-smoking photographer boyfriend, she exclaims "Wow! What a Zoovy Mod Circus." I knew what she meant! I had heard the Teen Titans use the word "groovy" and I knew that this was another pun. Bunny was talking just like the Titans. She couldn't be that bad.

The whole book was full of puns and really stupid and bad jokes. But it was *fun*! Her adventures at the circus and in the jungle were kinda goofy, but Bunny was so positive and the world was so good to her, that I started to buy into it. Maybe everyone was supposed to be real friendly and always upbeat!

As my family's drive to the Pacific went on, my sister and I began to read the book together. She didn't have time for the fashion designs that readers had sent in, but she did think that it would be nice to have a pipe-smoking, photographer as a boyfriend. I thought it would be great to have a six-foot blonde model as a girlfriend.

OK, *Bunny* #6 didn't turn out to be as joke-filled as an episode of *Laugh-In* (which, truth be told, I didn't understand most of the jokes any way. Why were they always laughing about a pill? Why was that girl always painted before she danced? What does Sock-It-to-Me really mean?), but it was a fun way to pass the hours on the highway. It also got my sister and me to talk about things and spend some time together. As the trip wore on, I read that *Bunny* #6 several times. About the third or fourth time I finally read the fine print at the bottom of the first page and found out that the book was actually six months old. It was dated December 1968 and here it was July 1969. As time conscious as I was at age 12, this really didn't bother me because I knew that *Bunny* was a book that didn't need to be bought the minute it hit the stands. It would still be hip in 30 years.

Well, maybe not, but *Bunny* is still a nice book that reflects a brief period when those in charge of the media didn't know who they were selling their product too. Everything today is so completely tested and validated before we even see it that a book like *Bunny* would not have made it to the newsstands. Just like *Teen Titans* (and a few other titles) from the same time period, it is an attempt by an older generation to connect with the generation that follows. Today, that brief period of rainbow swirls and psychedelic lights is fondly remembered and easily parodied. Mike Meyers has made three successful movies by digging up those boss times. His Austin Powers series captures the tone and texture (with some spies and a lot more sex thrown in) of *Bunny*.

Bunny was one swinging, groovy chick who could not check her "mod" at the door. *Bunny* #1 was cover dated December 1966. She lasted 21 issues in her own title. The first 18 were 68-page Giants—that is a lot of comic for your money. The last three issues were 52-pagers. She also appeared in the second (and last) issue of Harvey *Pop Comics*. I don't believe that she appeared in any other Harvey titles. It would have been fun to see how Bunny would interact with the other members of the Harvey Universe. What would she have said to Stumbo? Do you think Hot Stuff would have hit on her? Would she have mistaken Nightmare for a Unicorn?

Harvey Comics are often taken for granted and almost forgotten in comic's history. Maybe the problem is that they were everywhere during the late fifties and sixties. The ironic thing is that they were so popular, that today a good looking copy is hard to find. If you get a chance, grab a copy of *Hot Stuff*. Many of those covers were some of the funniest one-joke panels around.

Harveys, as much as I looked down on them at the time, were actually a big part of my childhood. When I go to the dentist, I instinctively look for a Harvey title and, when I don't find one, I feel a brief sadness that most of today's kids are growing up thinking that *Entertainment Weekly* is what childhood is about. I know that for one summer in 1969, a Harvey comic brought my sister and me closer to each other for a few hours. It certainly helped kill time as the highway flew by my window.

As I type this, I am sitting here wearing a tie that my sister sent me a couple of months ago. She still loves me.

The Poet Laureate of

FEBRUARY
JINGLE JANGLE
COMICS
No 1.
10¢
George Carlson
THE CALICO FISHERMAN - BINGO'S ADVENTURES IN FAIRYTALE LAND - THE FRIENDLY FOX - HORTENSE
THE LOVABLE BRAT - THE PIEFACE PRINCE - MR. LAMB THE LIONHEARTED AND BENNY BEAR

by Ron Goulart

A cartoonist and illustrator for several decades, George Carlson was active in comic books for less than seven years. That he is remembered at all today, however, is primarily because of that brief span of time from early 1943 through late 1949. The showcase for his eccentric, and funny, stories was *Jingle Jangle Comics*, a bimonthly published by the Famous Funnies folks and intended initially for younger readers. A major difference between Carlson and the other contributors to the magazine was that his two regular features, "Jingle Jangle Tales" and "The Pie-Face Prince of Old Pretzleburg," appealed not only to kids but to teenagers, adults and even a scattering of old fogies.

Born in 1887, George Leonard Carlson had a long career as a cartoonist, illustrator and puzzle maker before embarking on his relatively brief stint in comic books. Before the First World War he was doing gag cartoons plus an occasional color cover for the weekly humor magazine *Judge*. Carlson also turned out color illustrations for children's books and by the 1920s was a regular contributor to *John Martin's Magazine*, a then-popular children's publication. For the magazine Carlson produced numerous puzzle pages—mazes, anagrams, etc. His stuff in that area was simpler than that of the champion puzzle Sam Lloyd and closer to what A.W. Nugent did for so many years in newspaper funnies

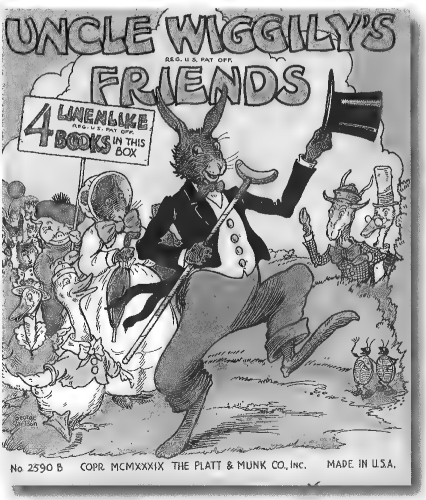
Old Pretzleburg

sections and comic books.

Carlson also produced puzzle, riddle and alphabet books for such publishers of inexpensive kids' books as Platt & Munk and even illustrated some Uncle Wiggily stories. He was also responsible for several how-to-books on cartooning, one such being *Draw Comics!—Here's How* published by Whitman in 1933. For a time he worked as an instructor for a mail-order cartoon course as well. Most of Carlson's early material was competent but traditional, barely hinting at the wacky side of his personality that comic books would unleash. Utilizing the serious side of his brain, he drew the dust jacket for *Gone With the Wind*, Margaret Mitchell's 1936 Civil War bestseller. An unusual credit for the future creator of the Pie-Face Prince.

During the years prior to his entry into comic books Carlson also carried on a parallel, and anonymous, career working as an assistant and frequent ghost on Gene Byrne's popular kid strip, *Reg'lar Fellers*. A gag-a-day feature, it began as a panel and by 1920 was a comic strip, running daily and Sunday. Despite the fact that Byrnes authored several books on how to draw cartoons during his lifetime, he himself wasn't much of an artist. Aware of his limitations, and following the example of many another cartoonist, he hired help. Among his helper/ghosts were Tack Knight, Burr Inwood and Carlson. Carlson's touch—as well as his distinctive lettering—is notable from the early 1920s onward. From the early 1940s he was ghosting *Reg'lar Fellers* in a style that was a more sedate, a more polite version of the one he'd use in *Jingle Jangle*. During the early Forties, Carlson warmed up for his stint with a short-lived Sunday that ran as a companion to *Reg-lar Fellers*. Titled *Dizzie Lizzie*, it was signed Gene Byrnes, but drawn by Carlson in a style much closer to that which he'd use on his comic book pages. Lizzie was a spindly little girl who could've passed for a cousin of the Pie-Face Prince. While the page was nowhere near as strange and funny as Carlson's later stuff, it was wackier and far less homespun than what went on with the fellers upstairs.

Back in 1940, the Eastern Color Printing Co., publishers of *Famous Funnies*, launched a new title. Called *Reg'lar Fellers Heroic Comics*, it was a mixture of new material (including Bill Everett's *Hydroman* and Tarpé Mills' *The Purple Zombie*) and reprints of such lesser newspaper strips as *Flyin' Jenny* and *Don Dixon*. The magazine introduced a Reg'lar Fellers club and devoted several


UNCLE WIGGILY'S
REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.
FRIENDS
4 LINENLAKE
REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.
BOOKS IN THIS BOX
No 2590 B COPR. MCMXXXIX THE PLATT & MUNK CO., INC. MADE IN U.S.A.

JINGLE JANGLE TALES
WELL... I WONDER WHAT'S CLICKIN'!
THE COFFEE-EYED HERMIT and the UNPRISONED PRINCESS
by George Carlson
MAYBE IT'S CHICKEN!
WOW! WHAT'S THIS? A PRINCESS IN THE CLINK! I MUST SEE IMMEDIATELY - BUT SOON
AND BECAUSE IT'S FAIRY TALE PRINCESS SHE'S STAY IN THE PRISON!
NCE, MANY MOONS AGO - THERE WAS A COFFEE-EYED HERMIT WHO LIVED ON SWELL RADIO PROGRAMS AND FAIRLY GOOD SANDWICHES - - - WITH HIM ALSO WAS HIS FAVORITE GREEN UMBRELLA - - ONE DAY, SOME STARTLING BUT HOT NEWS CAME LIMPING IN ON HIS RADIO -
HM! I'VE BOXED ALL DAY ON THIS BUTTERMILK TRAIN! - I WONDER WHAT IT IS THAT'S SUPPOSED TO BE RETURNED TO THE PRINCESS!
OH, IF I ONLY HAD THAT RING! - IF I ONLY HAD IT!
LOOK! HE BATS 'EM WITH BOTH HANDS!
BUT THE PRINCESS COZY IN HER COMFORTABLE TOWER, STILL WORE HER SECOND-BEST CROWN AND LOVELY GOLDEN CHAINS -
WHAT WAS THIS RING AND ITS MYSTERY?
CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

two features. After the sixth issue of "Jingle Jangle Tales," which had been the lead-off feature, was moved further back in the book and "The Pie-Face Prince" was sometimes cut to four pages and sometimes dropped altogether. For some reason, Carlson never drew another cover. By early 1946, he had stopped signing his stories.

Both of Carlson's features relied on the familiar props and devices of fairy tales and children's adventure stories. They made frequent use of kings, princes, princesses, witches, magic spells, haunted castles, pirates, missing jewels, hidden treasures, etc. Where Carlson's "Tales" differed from the traditional was in the addition of nonsense, burlesque, slapstick and satire. He delighted in puns and word play, literary devices that his long years of puzzle making certainly prepared him for. An obvious admirer of Lewis Carroll, he even borrowed the Walrus and the Carpenter for one of his yarns.

In his "Jingle Jangle Tales" he turned out multilevel material in which the visual and the verbal worked together. The dialogue was rich with left-handed puns and the twisting of stock phrases into new and unexpected shapes. Quite obviously he was amusing himself first and foremost. The very first tale was devoted to the Calico Fisherman and the Left-Handed Clay-Pipe. Among the many other characters who did turns in "Jingle Jangle Tales" were the Youthful Yodeler, who lived on a newly painted mountain and sold all kinds of weather by the yard; the Very Horseless Jockey, who became rich from a flavored snowball business and then set out, via a steamed-up steam engine, to buy a fine mahogany horse for himself; the Half-Champion Archer, who wasn't a full-time champ because he could never hit the king's special Tuesday target. Possibly Carlson's most audacious pun occurred in the tale in issue #31 (Feb 1948), which was entitled "Sleepy Yollo the Bedless Norseman."

There were all sorts of other unusual props, people and creatures wandering through Carlson's lively, cluttered pages. Such as a freshly toasted sandwich board, a young idea "with its buttons all neatly sewed on the wrong side," a four-footed yardstick maker, a zigzag zither, a lovely blond mazurka and a trio of jellybeans, "all slicked up with shoe-lace neatly pressed," who went forth into the world to seek their fortune. Most everything in the various kingdoms Carlson created was gifted with the power of speech, including birds, animals, flowers, steamrollers and doorknobs.

Pretzleburg, ruled over by King Hokum without much help from his pie-face offspring Prince Dimwitri, was similar in

pages to club news, contests for members and plugs for Byrnes' instruction books. The club and all mention of *Reg'lar Fellers* ceased after the fifteenth issue and the comic was just plain *Heroic Comics* thereafter. It's possible, though, that George Carlson, because of his association with Gene Byrnes, got to know *Heroic* editor Steve Douglas during that period. At any rate, when Douglas and Eastern Color introduced a third magazine early in 1943, Carlson was very much involved.

He'd been trying to sell "Jingle Jangle Tales" for several years, as both a newspaper Sunday page and a children's book. Douglas bought the concept, naming the new magazine *Jingle Jangle Comics*. Carlson designed the logo and drew the first six covers of the bimonthly. To fill out the contents, Douglas recruited such contributors as animator Larz Bourne, newspaper veteran Jack Farr and comic book artist/writer Kin Platt. Carlson was the featured player in most of the early issues, given as many as 16 pages for his

appearance and politics to the various operetta countries and locations to be found in many of the "Tales." Carlson had apparently long been fascinated by the term pie-face. In his 1933 how-to-cartoon book he included some sample Sunday page logos in the section of lettering. One of them was for "The Pie Face Kids." The recurrent characters in the saga of the Pie-Face Prince included Princess Panetella Murphy, who was more or less the object of Dimwitri's affections and could sometimes be found residing in "her left-footed uncle's second-best castle." Despite being named after a type of cigar, the princess was an attractive young lady and considerably brighter than the prince, which probably isn't saying much. A great deal of cooking and eating occurred in Pretzleburg and Panetella attempted to contribute to this by whipping up meals in her pressure cooker. She had, unfortunately, a tendency to forget about it and the cooker had a tendency to explode. Prince Dimwitri's two favorite enemies were Sir Razzo Razzh-Berri the Raging Rajah, an extremely short-tempered fellow, and the Wicked Green Witch, who was continually trying to foul up Dimwitri's life—and always failing. Carlson was a longtime resident of Connecticut and Green Witch's name was no doubt inspired by the way some people mispronounced the name of the town of Greenwich. Fond of explosions, the witch was frequently to be seen using bang powder in hopes of causing harm. Another regular was Second-Story Sam, Pretzleburg's best-known burglar.

The Pie-Face Prince's interests and adventures were wide-ranging. In one issue he set out to win the coveted Doopsniggle Prize with his corn beef-flavored cabbage plant and in another he went aloft in an eighteen karat balloon in search of a missing brass drum. People frequently went aloft in Pretzleburg and usually it was either Dimwitri or the Green Witch. Balloons were the favorite mode of ascension but a huge bubble gum bubble once did the trick. Carlson was also fond of schmaltz. Scientists used it in their experiments, the witch had faith in its powers and Pretzleburg's newspaper was named *The Daily Schmaltz*. It's difficult to tell whether Carlson was using the word for its slang meaning of overly sentimental words or music or its literal Yiddish meaning of chicken fat.

Jingle Jangle Comics ended with its 42nd issue late in 1949. This was a Christmas issue and both of Carlson's stories dealt with Yuletide themes. The "Jingle Jangle Tale" was called "The Steam-Heated Yule-Log and the Trusty Varlet" and ended with a Christmas dinner at the king's palace "while outside the castle the soprano scream-engine played the entire 'Plum-Pudding Opera' (with raisins)." The final go-round of Dimwitri found the Green Witch again resorting to bang powder, the prince being carried aloft by a huge green killy-loo bird. The story ended with a festive celebration in the town square around a huge Christmas tree. Even Nicodemus J. Doopsniggle, editor of *The Daily Schmaltz*, was in attendance.

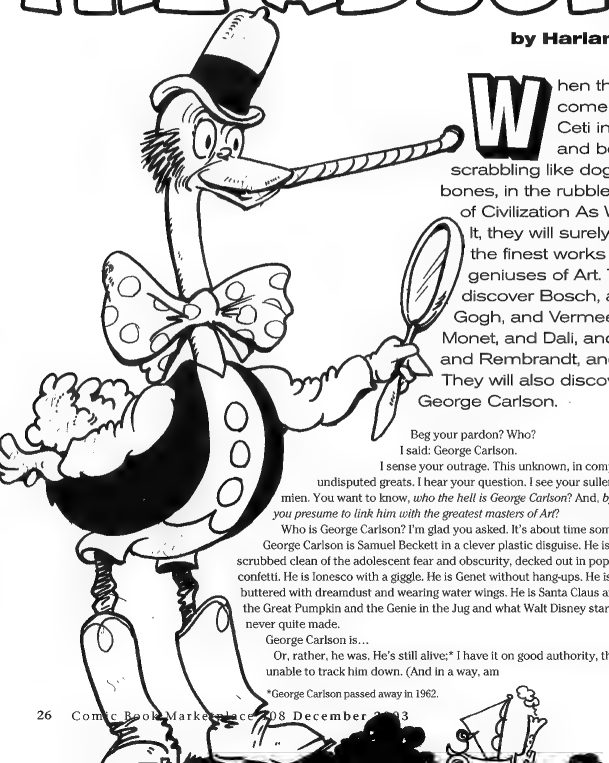
During World War II, Carlson also turned out a series of patriotic puzzles. These one-pagers ran 1944 and 1945, chiefly in *Famous Funnies*. In addition to promoting the collection of scrap paper for Uncle Sam, they made use of such familiar Carlson puzzle devices as finding the mistakes in a picture, tracing the correct road through a maze and finding all the objects beginning with the same letter. In 1946 Carlson also produced two issues of *Puzzle Fun Comics*. An oddity, it consisted mostly of puzzle pages—mazes, rebuses, cross-words, word ladders, etc. Each issue also contained a six-page tale entitled "Alec in Fumbleland." Starring a blond curly-haired young fellow named Alec Snigglewit and mixing melodrama parodies with characters out of *Alice In Wonderland*, they were much tamer than his *Jingle Jangle* work.

Reg'lar Fellers also ended in 1949 and Carlson returned to the illustrating of children's books.

JINGLE JANGLE
TALES
THE MUSICAL WHIFFLESNORT and the RED-HOT MUSIC ROLL
IF YOU CALL THAT MUSIC, THEN I'M PLUM CRAZY!
YEP! THAT'S MUSIC!
LONG AGO IN THE DAYS OF KING GOOFUS THE WORST, THERE LIVED IN A DARK, GOOEY FOREST, A YOUNG, BUT VERY MUSICAL WHIFFLESNORT — ME, I'M VERY HAPPY THERE, FOR EVERY DAY THE KING'S CHEF CANDY COOK WOULD BRING HIM THE LATEST TUNES WRAPPED IN FINE HOMESPUN MARSHMALLOW.
ONE DAY THERE CAME INSTEAD A LOVELY RED-HOT MUSIC ROLL ALL TUNED IN SHARP AND SINGING —OH! GO SWEETLY!
SWISH! ♪ FOLLYWOLLY DOODLE ALOW! ALOW! OH! ♪
ENOUGH!
IN WILD GLEE THE WHIFFLESNORT GRABBED HIS ONE-STRING WAHM-BOO AND SHOUTING
THAT'S RICH! KING GOOFUS OUGHT TO HEAR THIS! COME ON
© Ted Kord

COMIC OF THE ABSURD

by Harlan Ellison®



When the aliens come from Tau Ceti in 2755 a.d. and begin scrabbling like dogs digging bones, in the rubble that is left of Civilization As We Know It, they will surely unearth the finest works of the geniuses of Art. They will discover Bosch, and van Gogh, and Vermeer, and Monet, and Dali, and Wyeth, and Rembrandt, and Picasso. They will also discover George Carlson.

Beg your pardon? Who?

I said: George Carlson.

I sense your outrage. This unknown, in company with these undisputed greats. I hear your question. I see your sullen, reproachful mien. You want to know, *who the hell is George Carlson?* And, *by what right do you presume to link him with the greatest masters of Art?*

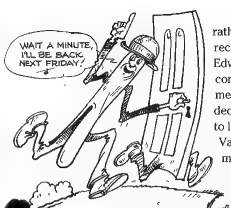
Who is George Carlson? I'm glad you asked. It's about time someone did.

George Carlson is Samuel Beckett in a clever plastic disguise. He is Harold Pinter scrubbed clean of the adolescent fear and obscurity, decked out in popcorn balls and confetti. He is Ionesco with a giggle. He is Genet without hang-ups. He is Pirandello buttered with dreamdust and wearing water wings. He is Santa Claus and Peter Pan and the Great Pumpkin and the Genie in the Jug and what Walt Disney started out to be and never quite made.

George Carlson is…

Or, rather, he was. He's still alive;* I have it on good authority, though I've been unable to track him down. (And in a way, am

*George Carlson passed away in 1962.



rather glad. I once received a letter from Edward Gorey, and considered going to meet him, but decided it was better to let gods live in their Valhallas, and not muck them about with the realities of acquaintanceship. The same goes for George Carlson.) But Carlson is no longer an "is." He's a "was." He doesn't do *that* any more.

Again, I hear you: what *that* is it he don't do no more?

Well, he don't chronicle the adventures of the youthful yodeler and the zig-zag zither; he don't tell what happened to the toothless scarecrow and the tamed wildflower; he don't reveal the startling tale of the fashionable fireman and the soft-boiled collar-button; he don't hip you to the extra-salty sailor and the flat-footed dragon; he don't regale you with the facts in the contretemps of the coffee-eyed hermit and the unprisoned princess; he don't…well, he just *doesn't*, not any more. And that, woeful folks, is terrible sad-making.

Because the man known as George Carlson, the incredible artist who—for forty-two issues of *Jingle Jangle Comics*—scripted and drew a series of unparalleled contemporary fables called "Jingle Jangle Tales," no longer draws. *Jingle Jangle Comics* is long since gone. It died in December 1949. At Christmastime. During a season of joy and colored lights and children's laughter, George Carlson went away, taking with him one of those rare and marvelous gifts we had been joyously allowed to savor from March of 1943 till that emptiest of Christmases. He went away, and he took the "Jingle Jangle Tales," and most of all he took "The Pie-Face Prince of Pretzleburg."

It won't mean much to kids today—surfeited as they are with this week's post-puberty sex symbol—but back in 1943 when I was nine years old, Dimwitri (The Pie-Face Prince) was a very special person in my world.

Sitting here now, writing about Carlson and his mad brood of improbable characters (was there ever a more convulsive duo than the self-winding organ-gander and the overstuffed bull-fiddle?), I find it barely short of incredible that he happened as he did. Carlson was easily thirty years ahead of his time. He was one of the first cartoonists of the absurd, on a par with Winsor McCay, Geo. McManus, Rube Goldberg or Bill Holman. Without the rampant sex, he was the progenitor of R. Crumb and Gorey and Tomi Ungerer and Ronald Searle and even Rowland Emmett. And how a) he came to develop his style in a time when cuddly animals were the going thing, b) a publishing house like Famous Funnies that trafficked in cuddly animals employed him, and c) kids like myself who really couldn't have understood what he was about, were wild about him…are improbabilities too staggering to deal with.

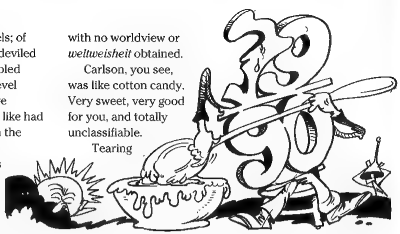
His drawing was neither simple nor retarded as was the bulk of the line-work being done. His style was one of

The PIE-FACE PRINCE of PRETZLEBURG
by George Carlson
A PALE CHEESE-LIKE MOON SHONE DOWN UPON THE PIE-FACE PRINCE UNTIL ONE NIGHT AS HE GAZED INTO HIS GOOD FRIEND THE MOON, HE SAW SOMETHING THAT MADE HIS VERY SOUL WITHER IN HIS BODY! FOR NOTHING A HANDSOME PRINCE LIKE HIMSELF HAS A RIGHT TO SEE!
LOOK, FELLA', THIS BAG I'VE GOTTA BURY IT!
NOW LISSEN I HAVE TO GET RID OF THIS BAG BY MIDNIGHT -- MAYBE-- YOU MUST HELP! HERE -- HOLD THIS SHOVEL WHILST I GO BACK FOR MORE TOOLS!
IN A TWINKLING HE WAS GONE AND THE PRINCE WAS ALONE WITH THE BAG -- IT JINGLED AS HE PICKED IT UP!
THE NIGHT WORE ON -- AN STILL THE SCARECROW DID NOT RETURN -- AND THE BAG STILL JINGLED --
WHAT WAS IN IT &?
COPYRIGHT GEORGE CARLSON

pre-*Mad* goodies secreted here and there in the panels; of jumbled and overlapping shapes that delightfully bedeviled the reader; of fats and thins that gamboled and bumbled everywhichway; of plot-lines surfeited with double-level puns and plays on words as Oscar Levant would have treasured. Carlson was a *rara avis*. One of a kind. His like had never been seen before, and since him it has all been the sincerest form of flattery.

I suppose pedants would find his little flummeries filled with examinations of Man and His Times, of the eternal struggle between Reality and Fantasy, of the Essential Absurdity of Existence. They're probably all there, replete with literary and allegorical allusions. But what a snore. Dissection of Carlson's work would merely leave lying about a great many racketeering doodle-bugs and non-skid dickeys, with no worldview or *weltweisheit* obtained.

Carlson, you see, was like cotton candy. Very sweet, very good for you, and totally unclassifiable.



Tearing him apart would have served no end, and serves no end now. And like cotton candy, he was ephemeral, dissolving even as you tried to grasp him. His meanings were about as obvious as "Waiting for Godot," and to those who seek meanings (in either), a Kafkaesque exercise.

What he had (and what these cartoon fables have even now, in the crackling, brittle pages of comic books nearly forty years old) was magic. Come on, I'll show you.

We can begin with the incredible adventure of the Colly-Flowered Walrus and the Woggle-Eyed Carpenter, from *Jingle Jangle Comics* #39. June, 1949.

JINGLE JANGLE TALES
NICE UPON A TIME THERE LIVED A VERY RICH BANKER, WHO OWNED THREE BANKS (TEN OMES) AND A BEAUTIFUL WELL-MANNERED HAT-TREE, UPON WHICH HE WOULD LOVINGLY HANG UP HIS HIGH HAT ON RETURN FROM A HARD DAY'S WORK. ONE DAY, HE ALSO HUNG HIS WELL-FILLED MONEY-BAG ON THE TREE.
The DOUBLE-DYED BANKER and the WELL-WATERED HAT-TREE.
BUT-
THAT NIGHT-
LOOKIT THAT OLE SPIGOT! IT'S LEAKIN'
AN' LEAKIN' AN' LEAKIN'
THE SPIGOT LEAKED AND THE HAT TREE BECAME SO WELL WATERED THAT IT GREW AND GREW!
AND GREW!
AN' LEAKIN'
AND GREW!

Once, long ago (Carlson begins), there lived a near-wealthy but colly-flowered walrus. His favorite three-tune radio, now of age, had come down with a razz-berry fever on the very day he was going to sell it to the king. So he took it to his dumbest friend, a busy woggle-eyed carpenter, saying, "Look, ole top! The king wants a snappy unwatered concert t'day. Fix th'goofus on this radio so it works, and bring it to him, and I'll pay you when I get that royal job as royal TRIPE INSPECTOR!"

(The panel shows the walrus, a rotund tusky chap with albino fur more like a sheep dog than a walrus, wearing a pink flowered vest, a green morning coat, huge floppy red shoes—certainly inadequate for ballet—white gloves, and bearing a battered radio with three birthday candles stuck in it. It also shows the carpenter who, over a fire composed of a burning firecracker, is boring a hole with chisel and bit in an alarm clock resting awkwardly in a frying pan. I don't interpret these things. I just tell you how they look to me.)

In the next panel, the carpenter is dashing off bearing the radio, saying, "Wait! All it needs is a grimmick! And I know where to get one…almost."

In the next panel, the walrus, whose crimson bowler has just blown off his head, is saying in consternation, "Oh-oh, I forgot! I left my triple-best sneezing powder inside that radio! An' if the king gets a whiff of that—oh, I must get it out before he finds it!" In the far distance, the carpenter can be seen streaking away down an exceedingly twisty road. (By the side of the road there is a gold-colored mushroom, smiling insipidly, for no discernible reason.)

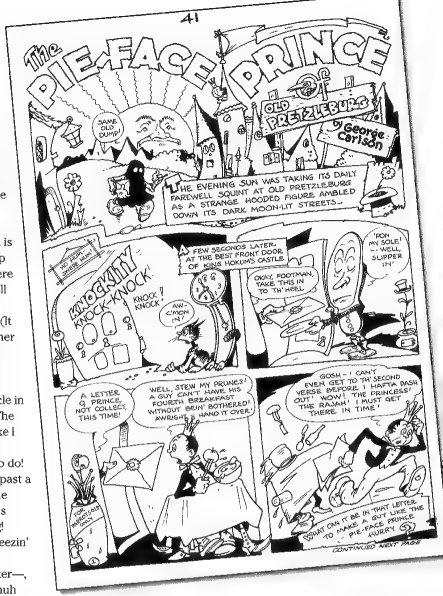
In due time, says the next panel, the carpenter came to a very, very cross road. "Hmmm! Seems I smell something spice-like from this here radio." He sits down under a tree that is wearing a trunk-expression like a pregnant woman who has just been led on a guided tour through a slaughterhouse. "Well, I'll sit down to think...anyway, I'll sit down." From behind the tree suddenly appears a yellow foot and the word AHEM! "Uh, what's that?" asks the carpenter. And since he is alone, we must assume it is the radio to whom he is speaking.

In the next panel the visitor has stepped around the tree, and in a story-panel (on which is perched a weird-looking bird wearing a blue top hat) tacked to the tree, Carlson informs us: There stood a late weather report who had on hand all the best and cheapest brands of weather as he warned the carpenter. In big red letters: WAIT! (It behooves me, really, to describe this late weather report. He stands about six three, wearing a Mother Hubbard in blue, with pink pantaloons showing underneath. On a generally humanoid body rests his head, which is a large round circle in which the words "fair & warmer" are printed. The buttons on the Mother Hubbard say R-A-I-N. Like I said, I don't explain 'em, I only describe 'em.)

At this moment the walrus knew just what to do! (For a wonder.) Hustling down the twisty road past a way-sign reading "To the Very Royal Castle," the walrus looks like a hirsute Zero Mostel, and he's saying, "Yessir! I'm goin' right smack to th' king! There's no time t'lose. Any minute now that sneezin' stuff will get ripe and his concert will be sour!"

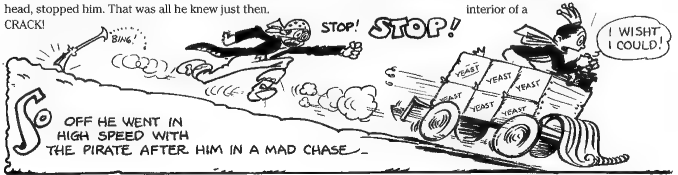
In the next panel, labeled: While the carpenter—, our secondary hero is being chased like a muthuh down the road toward the Very Royal Castle by the late weather report, still bearing the radio, and screaming, "No—I haven't time to wait for YOU! I must get to this nice dark gloomy castle an' SOON!"

BUT (says the next panel) at the very doorway a sign (reading: Rooms to Let—See Janitor), coming down on his head, stopped him. That was all he knew just then. CRACK!


41
The PIE-FACED PRINCE
OF OLD PRETZELBURG
by George Carlson
THE EVENING SUN WAS TAKING ITS DAILY FAREWELL SQUINT AT OLD PRETZELBURG AS A STRANGE HOODED FIGURE AMBLED DOWN ITS DARK MOON-LIT STREETS...
KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!
A FEW SECONDS LATER, AT THE BEST FRONT DOOR OF KING HOKUM'S CASTLE
OKAY, FOOTMAN, TAKE THIS IN TO TH' KING.
'PON MY SOLE! — WELL, SUPPER IN!
A LETTER Q. PRINCE, NOT COLLECT. THIS TIME!
WELL, STEW MY PRUNES! A GUY CAN'T HAVE HIS FOURTH BREAKFAST WITHOUT BEIN' BOTHERED! AWRIGHT — HAND IT OVER!
GOSH — I CAN'T EVEN GET TO TH' SECOND VERSE BEFORE I HAFTA BUST OUT! NOW! THE PRINCESS! TH' RAJAH! I MUST GET THERE IN TIME!
WHAT ON IT BE IN THAT LETTER YOU MAKE PALE PRINCE PIE-WURRY?
CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

Overleaf, a large wide guard picked up the drowsy carpenter. It was a grade A, but rough, welcome. "In y'come," says the guard. In the lower left corner of the panel, the radio also looks bonked.

In the next panel, the carpenter, clutching his head, is incarcerated in a cell that looks like the interior of a



JINGLE JANGLE TALES
The VERY ROYAL LION and the SUNBURNT CHEESE-CAKE
George Carlson
ONCE UPON A TIME THERE LIVED A VERY ROYAL LION WHOSE BEST FRIEND WAS A YOUNG MOLE WITH PALE, SUSPENDERS AND A NINTH BIRTHDAY
HAPPY BIRTHDAY! AND HERE'S A RED-HOT PROMISE FOR THIS OTHERS SIX CANDLES!
HEY! READ THIS RED-HOT PROMISE ME I — I'M BURNING MY RED MITTENS IN CASE I GET BURNT
HM! LOOKS MORE LIKE THERE'S A HOT SURPRISE FOR YOU!
GOOD! I LIKE LIGHT CAKE!
"MOON CAKE" THERE'S NOT A MINUTE TO LOSE... SO WHY HURRY?
BUT HE NEVER FOUND OUT WHAT THIS PROMISE WAS, FOR JUST THEN IT BLEW OFF ITS SPRING AND STEAM FOR A FIRE SALE.
TWO FIGURES HURRIED BY
CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

boiler (save that the barred window has curtains on it, and a lopsided stove in the corner sports a dripping old coffee pot). Through the barred door comes the voice of the large wide guard, "An' here's y'r cell. A lovely view an' three kinds of heat—steam, gas, an' midsummer!" The carpenter is groaning, "Ooo! Th' radio!" Which really seems dissociated, but then what can one expect when one has fled a late weather report, been zonked by a rooms to let sign, and thrown up under a jail, all in the space of three panels? (The radio is saying, forlornly, "Lissen, boss, when do I get fed?")

Now the plot takes on a genuinely helter-skelter pace as we see in the next panel a Rube Goldberg locomotive pulling something that looks like a cast-iron baby's crib. The explanatory panel tells us: meantime, the walrus boarded a well-buttoned unlocal train headed direct to the castle. Hay was cheap, so the scenery was changed daily.

The last weather report (whose face now says "hot") is engineering the loco (which also has curtained windows…on the outside), and on the back deck of the baby crib, the walrus is staring out and intoning, "Oh me! Night is falling with nice neat patches, an' look who is the engineer! I don't like that guy! I'm leavin'!" From the sky, needless to add, there are nice neat patches falling.

Next panel, the report (with a face that says "rain") is saying, "Now's your chance," and the walrus has one leg over the rail, ready to dive, saying, "Okay, here I go!" As the loco dashes tracklessly away in the next panel, a delicate "tweet!" lofting back on the breeze, the walrus lands flat on his ass in the middle of a PLOP!

And in the castle the guard reported to the king, "Yep, he's in the guest cell AND he has a three-tune RADIO with him!" Before the king could answer—a loud whistle sounded outside. TWEET! (Accompanied by a C-note.)

The king stalks to the balcony, saying, "Can it be that UNLOCAL on time again? I'll go out on my 98 cent balcony and look." Two steps out, the balcony rips away from the outer wall, and the king plunges forward, screaming, "OOOPS! This cheap balcony! It's loose—an' HERE I go!"

The king landed right on the little flat-car (right on his face). The late weather report—now reading "fair & hotter"—says, rather maliciously, I feel, "Hah! Th' king! Long may it reign! And it WILL rain tomorrow, too!"

After they had gone a few miles…the sneaky late weather report unhooks the loco, and chortling. "Guess I'll pull up the hook and leave you, ole bean!" he boils away, his face reading "snow."

Meanwhile, the walrus was now walking up to the royal front door. He spies the broken sign that clonked the carpenter. "Huh…a piece of a sign or something!"

(Held upside down, the "rooms to let" reads: 137 01 51X10071.)

Reading the sign in pure

arithmetic, he rang the bell at the same time, saying, "137 - 07 ÷ 51 x 100 = 71. 137 = 07 + 51x + 97 + 97 ÷ or – 7000000 x 0 ÷ 1 = ?"

I particularly like the plus-or-minus.

The heavy guard of course opened the door. He looks at the walrus holding the broken sign, and making reference to the pure arithmetic says, "It's a good thing you had the password. Where's th' rest of it?" "Over there," says the walrus, pointing with his cane. Did I mention the cane? Yeah, well, somewhere along the line he acquired a cane.

As the guard stepped out to look, the walrus sneaked in, slammed the door shut and turned the key, muttering, "Stupid oaf!"

Next panel, a big round one, the wide heavy guard is blamming on the door with ten thousand fists, shouting, "Hey! Y'big hairy baboon! Whatsa idea of lockin' me OUT? Hey you, open up!"

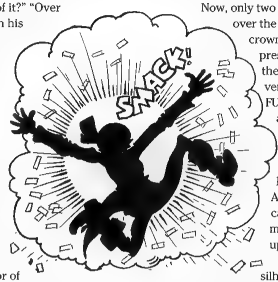
Now…down a treacly staircase in the sub-basement of the very royal castle, the walrus approaches the door of the cell wherein the carpenter lies in durance vile. "Heh, heh, heh! I locked that sap out for good! Now I'm alone in here and I can find out where this smell comes from. It's just like my SNEEZE-STUFF! I'll open this door with its very correct doorknob an'—"

Then, suddenly, from within the cell comes an explosive, atomic AH-CHOO! And the door is blown outward, once again knocking the woggle-eyed walrus on his woolly west end. Out comes the carpenter, all smiles, holding the three-tune radio which now looks much healthier. The radio is sending and the candles have somehow become pink, phallus-like tubes. "Look-it," says the carpenter, holding the radio aloft, "it's FIXED! I found a grimmick in that—er—cell…and with that sneeze stuff it's sending out a BEAM, too!"

Then, in a long shot of the countryside, in which we see the most peculiar shape of the castle (with a nightshirt hanging out to dry and an extremely satiated sun sinking in the East…the East!?!), we read the panel that says: YES, a strange beam came out of the castle. And there it is, humble as little green peas, a jaggedy bolt of something or other that stretches across to the next panel where the legend reads, "Suddenly the king (alone on the flat car) felt something hit the high tip of his crown." It is, *naturellement*, the jaggedy bolt of castle-beam. "OW!" shouts the king, "what was that? And the car! It's beginning to move!" Yes. so it was! And soon it was moving fast, guided by the beam, and direct to the king's castle.

While, inside the castle, the walrus and the carpenter stride toward the front door. "I know what we will do," says the carpenter, reaching for the doorknob, "let's take it outside and see how it works!"

As he opened the door, the car, with the king on it, whizzed right inside. "Th' king!" ejaculated the carpenter. "Yep! Here I come!" said the king humbly. The walrus says nothing in that panel.



Now, only two panels from the end. the king leans over the flat-car rail, the lightning-rod in his crown still a-quiver, and as the carpenter presents him with the radio, he makes the longest speech of the story, a veritable tour de force. "WONDERFUL! You indeed have it! A radio with a super-schmaltz-beam! You should have a super-schmaltz reward—both of you—you, Mr. Walrus, will become my most royal TRIPE INSPECTOR at an almost salary! And you, my friend," addressing the carpenter, not the radio, "shall be my ROYAL CARPENTER…and clean up the mess around here."

And so, in the last panel, a silhouette square, they both had jobs to keep them busy ever after!

As for the guard and weather report, they were certainly never heard of again!

THE END.

The epic poem died a lingering death when the form of the sonnet came into vogue. When the narrative style was introduced, poetry began a decline that is evident even today. And even before the poem can vanish, we see both the short story and the novel taking a back seat in importance to the kinetic forms of motion pictures and the other visual media. Comic books were the precursor of this change. And I find it not strange at all that a Carlson should have managed to spin his fantasy webs for so short a time. He was too far in advance of himself.

What he did was miraculous and happens only once in a particular art-form. We will never see his like again.

Thank god he passed this way at least once.

It was a richer world for George Carlson, from '43 to '49. And have you noticed…it's been a lot sadder since.

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by Pat Calhoun

In Praise of Pretzleburg

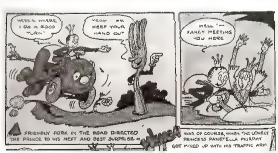
"Hey, Mister Tambourine Man, play a
song for me;
In the jingle jangle morning I'll come
following you."

It's a sobering thought for comic collectors to ponder the fate of *Jingle Jangle Comics*. The strip that gave the title its name, "Jingle Jangle Tales," created, written and drawn by George Carlson is as brilliant as anything the four-color form has to offer, yet it is at best an obscure footnote in most "versions" of comics history. This becomes doubly puzzling when one considers that Carlson also contributed a second strip, "The Pie-Face Prince of Pretzleburg," both of which appeared in almost every one of the 42 issues published from 1942 through 1949. The publisher was Eastern Color, who had launched the first ongoing and continuous comic book, the newspaper strip reprint title, *Famous Funnies*, in 1934.

Carlson's *Jingle Jangle* work is a richly textured confection of supremely surreal silliness. Puns pop like popcorn as zany images dance by, as in one tale where a walking talking jelly bean tries to save his pint-sized king by tossing a stick of "atom gum" down the gullet of the goblin who's got the king under a curse that keeps him small. Carlson was 55 years old and the World War was raging in 1942. It's quite likely that during those dark times Carlson saw his strips as a gift to the children, a demonstration that happiness lies in following your fancy.

Jingle Jangle #4 (Aug 1943) features a beautiful Carlson cover of Dimwitri, the Pie-Face Prince. The "scissor-bill" bird about to cut Dimwitri's rope—tied with a red ribbon to an anchor with a lock and key in it—the way the Prince's pen has plunged through the "10¢" balloon, the web-adorned crescent moon that dangles under Jangle, hanging from the "S" in comics: these delirious details prove George Carlson the madcap master poet of the improbable. Pie-Face Prince leads off the insides, cruising in his new dingabus when he comes to a fork in the road. Oh folks, this fork is a smiling three-tiner who points Dimwitri towards the Princess Pannetella, and after some adventures in lollypop land she flies back with him (in the dingabus which has since sprouted wings) to meet his dad, King Hokum, back in Pretzleburg.

***Jingle Jangle* #4 (Aug 1943) This is the one and only cover to feature the Pie-Face Prince of Pretzelburg, and it sure is a humdinger, as are the other five "Carlson" covers that make issues 1 through 6 special treasures.**


WELL, WHAT DO I DO NOW?
HERE, YOU HAVE SOME OF MY GUM!
FRIENDLY FORK IN THE ROAD DIRECTED THE PRINCE TO HIS NEXT AND BEST ADVENTURE.
AH, SO YOU'RE MEETING YOU HERE.
WAS OF COURSE WHEN THE LONELY PRINCESS PANNETELLA FINALLY GOT FIXED UP WITH HIS TRAVELING MATE.

A friendly fork in the road reunites Pie-Face Prince and Princess Pannetella in this sublime example of Carlson's "show it like it sounds" series of sight gags (from *Jingle Jangle* #4).

The "other" strips, "Gup and His Gremlins," "Hortense," "Scotty the Sleuth Dog" and "Bingo" are less than memorable, although "Butty and Fatty" (two boys who work for their grandpa at the Wacky Hotel) score points for taking on a bad guy called Rubberman, whose "plastic" powers aren't enough that the boys can't keep him at bay through ten enjoyable pages.

This issue's "Jingle Jangle Tale" is also ten pages—this early issue being one of the 64-pagers (which would soon "slim down" to 48). It's another Carlson concoction of

continued on page 49

B-LITTLED GOLDEN AGE TITLES

by Jon Berk

The late 1930s and early 1940s were full of companies attempting to carve a niche in the fast-growing comic industry. Some titles (and publishers for that matter) vanished before readers even knew they existed. It is time to dust off the old comic box again. This time about we will take a look at some "B titles" of the Golden Age.

Blazing Comics

Blazing Comics, as published by REWL/Enwil/Rural Home Publications featured the first Chinese super-hero—"The Green Turtle." Drawn by Chu Hing, a Chinese-American, this title has links to the ubiquitous comic shop of Funnies, Inc. (see indicia of issue 3). Although the Green Turtle fought Japanese soldiers in China, he obviously owes a great debt to Batman. His most used mode of transportation was the "Turtle plane." When not combating the Japanese, the Turtle would "withdraw" to his secret lair, the "Turtle Shell." Although tantalizingly promised in each issue of this short-lived title, neither the name nor the origin of the Green Turtle is ever revealed.

The first issue (Jun 1944) has the Turtle rescuing a village of Chinese from Japanese soldiers who have attacked them. During this rescue he meets and takes with him a female companion and a young boy, whom he dubs "Burma Boy" (move over Robin!).

The most notable thing of the Green Turtle series is the remarkable covers that often have the Turtle casting his Turtle shadow. These covers (and contents) truly deserve a second look by those interested in hardcore esoteric Golden Age books. The stories, which always reflected conflicts with the Japanese, often have the main characters trading aphorisms with each other. ("Danger is nothing without fear." "One man must never plan his course from the actions of another," and "Believe only half of what one sees and none of what one hears.") The Turtle only appeared in the first four issues (Jun 1944 to Sep 1944, Feb 1945). Actually, although there are six issues, only the first four have original material. The fifth and sixth issues (with covers dated Mar and Apr 1945) contain "remainders" with original covers. The remainders are from the early 1950s. Issue 5 has the contents of *Action* #181 (Sep 1953) while the sixth issue appears to have material from *Colossal Features Magazine* #3 (1950)

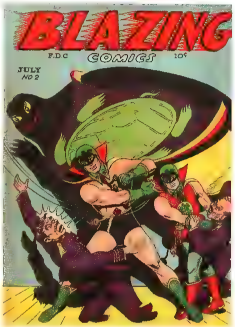
The rest of the contents of the 1940s material are rounded out by the obligatory jungle feature featuring a white woman named "Jun Gal." She is the lone survivor (with her mammy) of a jungle expedition. Raised by the local natives, she eventually ascends to lead the tribe and to protect the tribe's "Pit of Death" (containing radium) from bad guys, such as Nazis. The only other "notable" features are the "Black Buccaneer" (featured on the cover to issue 5), who is a privateer working as a spy for Queen Elizabeth, and "Red Hawk" (featured on the cover to issue 6), a full blooded native American Indian who is a freelance fighter pilot of the skyways against the Japanese.

Banner Comics

"No one knows his name. No one knows from whence he comes. He is just Captain Courageous." Thus is described the lead character of this short-lived series. This "fearless champion of America" pits himself against the growing specter of Nazi infiltration of America's shores. Attired in a brightly garbed outfit of red and blue with a star mask, Captain Courageous was able to fly and possessed tremendous strength. The epic stories have the good Captain taking on Nazi spies as they try to infiltrate American industry, or repelling a Nazi invasion in Newfoundland. The captain could zip around the air and get himself shot from a cannon. As the actual entry into the war was only a few months away, Captain Courageous would utter such jingoistic statements as, "Friends, these are strenuous times the democracies are facing. Have faith in them as the people who established them did and we'll all come out victorious."

Actually, as Golden Age fare, some of the adventures were fairly entertaining. For instance in issue 5, inventor John Mason is distraught because no one will give him an opportunity to demonstrate his "atomic gun." While his daughter Mary is taking the plans to show the authorities, she is kidnapped by Nazi spies (apparently better informed then the American authorities), who immediately desire the prototype of the gun. Mary manages to escape after her hair is dosed in lighter fluid by flinging herself out a window. Lucky for her, C.C. just happens to come by and catch her. After saving her, Captain Courageous winds up taking on

Blazing Comics #3 (Sep 1944). Of all the obscure Golden Agers he sure cast the best shadow! The Green Turtle by Chu Hing holds an honorable place among the "grade B" heroes of the era.



a whole invading Nazi force led by the nefarious Black Baron. The Nazi force is repelled by use of the atomic gun as it makes its debut much to the misery of the fleeing Nazis.

After issue 5, the good Captain actually appeared in his own comic for one issue, *Captain Courageous* #6. If you blinked you missed this issue, which was the "last" of the run in March 1942.

But never fear, the Captain continued the fight against the Nazi hordes without missing a beat, commencing in the May 1942 issue of *Four Favorites*. He eventually took his fight to the Pacific against the Japanese and Capt. Nippon. Toward the end, he found his cape too noticeable, so he abandoned his costume and joined the Marines.

The other "recurring" features were "Typhoon Tyson," a South Pacific adventurer who bumps into secret armies, "Kay Mckay" air hostess, tough girl of the skies, the mandatory kid group led by "Paul Revere, Jr." and "The Lone Warrior." The latter was vaccinated with the elixir of power by his dying father. Donning a red, white and blue uniform with stars (sound familiar?) he fights Nazis and monsters with his wonder plane. (In issue 5 he fights creatures who can only be killed by piercing their ears since blood flows no where else. He wipes out these hideous creatures before they wipe out the command structure of the American armed forces. Phew!)

Finally, introduced in the last issue is "The Sword." In a twist of the Capt. Marvel theme, young Arthur Lake, while on holiday in England, finds a sword in the stone. He is informed that he has been chosen for his "pure heart" to take up the sword. Once drawn, he will have the strength of ten. When he returns home and pulls the sword out, he is transformed into an adult, cleverly named "The Sword." Placed back in the stone, Arthur returns to his form as a youth. The Sword swished about a variety of Ace titles.

Although these Ace periodicals are not well known to collectors, many sport some great Golden Age covers and interiors, including the first created by a young Jim Mooney, Dave Berg, and work by Harry Sahle. Check out *Banner #3*, *Our Flag #2*, or early *Super-Mystery*, *Four Favorites*, or *Lightning Comics*. The vitality and clean renditions on young Jim Mooney's covers make these books little known Golden Age treasures.

Banner Comics #3 (Sep 1941). Captain Courageous wades into the Nazis via Jim Mooney on this cover re-creation tribute to the red-white-and-blue heroes who helped the US win WW-II.

Bang-Up Comics

Cover-dated as the same month that Pearl Harbor was bombed, the Progressive Publishers promised that the stories were by world famous artists and storytellers: "each of these is an expert in his field. When they draw and tell of airplanes, they have made a careful study of the subject. When they take their heroes into the deepest jungle they are only taking them to places they themselves have been and about which they know the true facts." With that articulation of ties to reality and thorough research, this three-issue title featured "Cosmo Mann" super sleuth of the scientific world and his "sun-ray" gun.

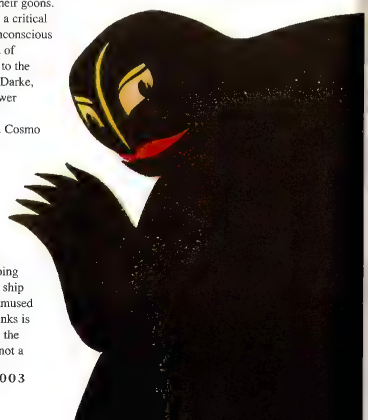
Cosmo Mann was your basic "reality" strip of scientist invents ray gun wanted by foreign bad guys who kidnap his friend, and he chases them half round the world. (Although not officially in the war, this title like many others for the preceding year had our heroes taking on the bad guy Nazis.) Mann had developed a ray gun which could destroy tanks. His demonstration for the army does not go unnoticed by a foreign agent who reports back to Commander Darke on an "obscure Atlantic island." Darke decides to assign Rudolph and Dirk (a comic "in" joke) to do the dastardly deed and abscond with this weapon of great destructive power.

However, these agents prove to be inept and fail at their appointed task. They are foiled by Cosmo and his friend Archy. Never to be one who takes failure lightly, Darke himself flies his dirigible across the ocean and fells the two with gas just as Cosmo and Archy have finished up with their goons. However, Darke makes a critical mistake and takes an unconscious Archy with him instead of Cosmo. And, unknown to the diabolical Commander Darke, he failed to take the power source of the gun.

This is a good thing. Cosmo has just been itching to crank up his flying suit—nothing like a sun ray suit which allows Cosmo to zip across the ocean and catch up with the evil C.D. Meanwhile, Commander Darke is doing his nastiest by sinking a ship or two. He is none too amused when Archy (who he thinks is Cosmo) won't cough up the secret of the gun. Well, not a second too soon Cosmo has arrived and overpowered a guard just before Archy was about to buy the ranch. Reunited with his gun and its power source, Cosmo is ready to rock and roll, but just then the obligatory big-time storm rolls in confounding an already murky situation.

Undaunted, Cosmo switches back to the old sun ray suit and is able to lead the dirigible out of the storm. However, Darke, recovered from the surprise attack of Cosmo, leads his ship back to his island. There Cosmo, with Archy at his side, faces impossible odds. But the ray gun proves too much for the minions and war machines of Commander Darke. With fists flying and the ray gun arrayin', although outnumbered, Cosmo and Archy win the day. Unfortunately, C.D. runs, vowing to fight Cosmo and capture his weapon another day. However, that day never came as the title (and company) folded with the third issue.

Then there is the "reality" of Buzz Balmer who accidentally runs through his dad's "minus beam" and shrinks to a small size. Clearly derivative of the diminutive hero Dollman produced by Quality Comics, Buzz immediately



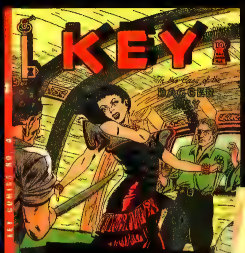
enlists as a secret agent for army intelligence. Traveling about in his miniaturized plane, he proclaims that he is an instrument for the "future of civilization." In the second issue (Mar 1942) he buzzes (pun intended) about the world. In this adventure, he travels the world shrinking various demonic dictators who look like Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin. The depth of these tales is best summed up by one German soldier who says, after seeing his leader shrunk, "I ain't working for no squirt. I quit."

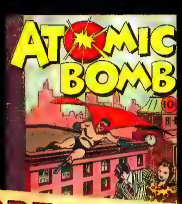
The final dose of "reality" is served up by "Lady Fairplay." Why try to describe this damsel who deals with foes with fists of fury when she is succinctly described by her feature: "At the request of the brilliant scientist Professor Amazo, Mary Lee, modest young school teacher, undergoes an experiment which transforms her into a beautiful creature with unlimited energetic powers. Seeking an outlet for these unnatural changes, Mary assumes the guise of Lady Fairplay, goddess of chastisement and dreaded foe of the underworld." A whirlwind of energy, her short-lived career is typified by the story where, as she is teaching a class, she overhears (with her super-sensitive ears) a radio broadcast of a bank robbery. She gets up and asks a student to conduct class "for a while" and off she goes—switching into her costume and learning where the robbers are—off she zooms in her suped-up car, jumps into the escape airplane of the robbers, beats them up, gets the plane turned around, and calmly resumes the end of the class and her teaching duties.

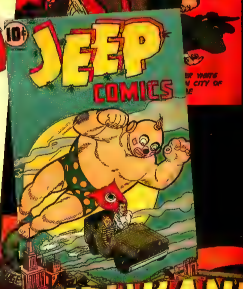
It is easy to make fun of these early and multiple forays into the hero sweepstakes of the early 1940s. These titles reflect the endless attempts by anyone with publishing connections to make a buck in the burgeoning industry of comics. Copycat characters and what appear to be hokey heroes were all attempts to catch lightning in a bottle and be the next Superman. Unfortunately for the above, none left an indelible imprint upon the nascent development of the exploding market. However, what each title lacked in creativity or enduring potential is more than made up in the unbridled energy and enthusiasm characteristic of the early Golden Age of comics.

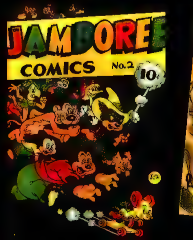
Bang-Up Comics #1 (Dec 1941). Cosmo Mann's Sun-Ray Gun failed to set the newsstands on fire, as did #2's cover "star"—the diminutive Buzz Baimer, or those stalwarts on #3's cover—the "sailor" duo Spud and Punchy.

BLACK MARKET
COMIC BOOKS OF THE GOLDEN AGE!









by Will Murray

The most pivotal period in comic book history was triggered not by the introduction of a startling new super-hero or the launching of an innovative fresh direction, but by the dropping of the first atomic bomb. In a flash, the deaths knell of the Golden Age of Comics tolled. The Atom Age was upon the comic book landscape.

Of course, this didn't happen overnight. The first sign of the new era was a strange proliferation of comic book one-shots produced in the period as World War II was winding down.

Between the autumn of 1945 on through the following year, a bizarre blizzard of new titles descended upon the nation's newsstands. Most had melted away by the summer of 1946, leaving little trace of their existence. There's an incredible story there. One unsuspected by even the most savvy of comics collectors.

During World War II, comic books sold like never before or since. Kids loved them. Adults read them. Soldiers in battlefields from Europe to the Pacific devoured them. Both *Superman* and *Batman* peaked at over 1,600,000 copies sold, with *Captain Marvel* not far behind at 1,300,000 per issue. It was a true Golden Age, for profit-hungry publishers as well as for readers.

There was only one problem: Paper.

Pulp paper was an important wartime commodity. It was used in making ammunition packing containers and other necessary war items. Two key ingredients in making pulp paper, sulfur and chlorine, were also critical to the war effort. In December 1941, with Pearl Harbor still fresh on everyone's mind, Washington created the Paper and Pulp Branch of the Office of Production Management, headed by Norbert A. McKenna, to protect what was designated the Number One critical war material. It was McKenna's job to regulate civilian paper use. This made magazine publishers understandably nervous.

"The Government has no plans to discriminate between publishers and arbitrarily fix which magazine gets paper and which one does not," *Writer's Digest* reported early in 1942. "The value of *Time* magazine as a purveyor of news, or of *Superman Comics* as a journal of entertainment will not be matched against one another with a car of paper going to the winner."

All publishers had to worry about was rationing. It was grim, too. Existing comics publishers had their paper allotments frozen at 1942 levels. This meant publishers could not expand. If they wanted to put out a new title, an old one had to be sacrificed. Many were. Normally, launching new titles could be a risky enterprise. But in wartime, everything sold extremely well. Returns were almost non-existent.

As WWII wore on,

the crisis grew worse. In 1943, publishing paper allotments were cut to 90% of their 1942 allotment. In '44 it was further cut to 75%. Now upset publishers had to cut healthy, top-selling titles.

This explains unexpected wartime casualties like Fawcett's *America's Greatest Comics*, Timely's *Daring Mystery Comics*, MLJ's *Shield-Wizard Comics*, Street & Smith's *Doc Savage Comics*, and others. Technically, none were cancelled. Publishers considered them "suspended for the duration."

Powerhouse DC Comics held the line. They cancelled no ongoing titles. By dropping frequencies, they instead reallocated their paper in-house. On the other hand, no sooner had Pearl Harbor happened than publisher Victor Fox shut down his entire line and fled into military service, some say to escape his creditors.

During this three-year period, ingenious ways were discovered to circumvent paper rationing. Overall, the major comic book publishers managed to hold their lines together, and even expand. Lesser publishers like Harry "A" Chesler and Centaur simply folded. Others found salvation in the use of surrogate publishers.

Ned Pines, whose line included a huge list of pulps as well as the Nedor comics group, worked a deal with a publisher named William H. Wise to publish comics for them. They were Nedor titles, but produced by Wise using his own imprint and more importantly, using William Wise paper. Technically, this was entirely legal. But other operators crossed the line. And were caught.

A flock of pulp writers and journalists went to Washington to work for the Office of War Information in this period. Consequently, *Writer's Digest* felt the need to run a wartime column called "The Mills in Washington" by John Maguire.

The May 1945 installment ran this tantalizing squib:

"All copies of two comic magazines, *Pop Pop* and *Twinkle*, were called in by the distributor, after WPB decided the evidence submitted by the two publishers involved indicated neither had a paper consumption quota for magazine publication."

During the war, when you practically needed a license to print anything, this was an offense taken seriously by the War Production Board under Limitation Order L-244. The order stipulated that any publisher who did not issue a magazine in 1942—which was the base period used to determine paper quotas—had no allotment for paper.

But it gets more interesting. That same month, the WPB reported that they halted an astounding 37 comic books since February alone! This was a practice they had been doing since the WPB instituted the first pulp-paper rationing in 1943. Who knows how many comic titles were quashed between 1943 and October 1945, when the WPB was abolished?

So what happened to the two comics cited?

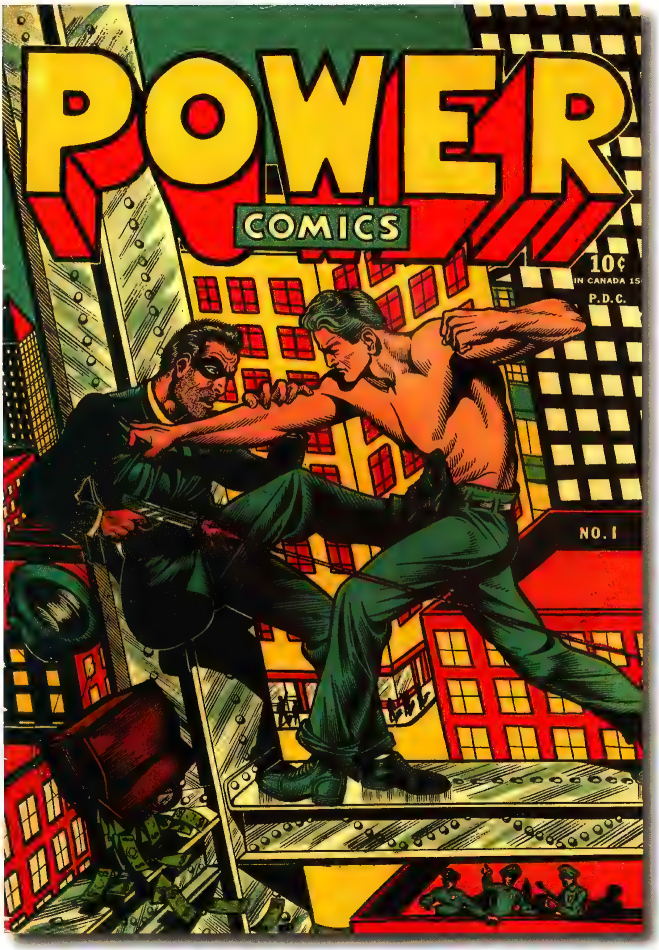
Overstreet does list *Twinkle* #1, dated May 1945, from Spotlight Publications, as well as an undated *Pop-Pop Comics* with a suspected 1945 release date from R. B. Leffingwell. Apparently copies of both illegal titles escaped the distributor callback. But they may be rarer than anyone guesses.

Or maybe not. In the July 1946 *Writer's Digest*, columnist Harriet Bradfield explains what may have happened, not only to those two titles, but to several others.

"Black market publishers who used more paper during the war than they were allowed to consume had their books confiscated and then were able to buy them back and these books were released at one fell swoop to the stands."

The War Production Board's confiscation of black market comic books and the postwar paper crunch of 1945-46 may explain the proliferation of oddball one- and two-shot comic books released in the months following the war.

Published by obscure fly-by-night publishers, often with no cover dates or issue numbers, these titles probably represent seized comic books later dumped into distribution channels after paper controls were relinquished by the federal government.


POWER
COMICS
10¢
IN CANADA 15¢
P.D.C.
NO. 1

The temptation to pirate comics during the war was great. With print runs virtually selling out for even the least popular titles, no risk was involved. Publishing comic books was the next nearest thing to printing money!

If the WPB seized an amazing 37 comics alone in the first part of 1945, it stands to reason that they confiscated many others between 1943-44. If so, what were they? And what happened to them?

Probably no legitimate publisher would risk the WPB's wrath during war time. Thus, a search for clues to these seized titles must begin with other output from the publishers of *Pop-Pop* and *Twinkle Comics*. As it turns out, *Pop-Pop*'s R. B. Leffingwell released two others, the one-shot *Topsy-Turvy* and two issues of *Jeep Comics* in that time frame. There's a fair chance these were also illegal titles. In 1944, Leffingwell had produced the atrociously-titled one shot, *Chuckle, the Giggly Book of Comic Animals*.

Two months before Spotlight released *Twinkle*, they issued *Gem Comics*, *Latest Comics* and *Three Ring Comics*, dated March and April 1945. In 1944, they put out *Ship Ahoy* and *Tailspin*—both one-shots. That was virtually their entire output.

The pattern seems to be generic one-shots, usually in the humor and funny animal category, featuring obscure or unlicensed characters never seen before or since, like Bee-29 the Bombardier and Wiggles the Wonderworm. Where there are super-heroes, they are bottom-feeders like the Green Turtle and The Bogeyman.

What were the other seized titles? Consider this list of suspects, all bearing 1944-46 dates:

Captain Wizard Comics, *Carnival Comics*, *Courage Comics*, *Cavalier Comics*, *Conqueror*, *Scooter Comics*, *Laffy-Daffy Comics*, *Patches*, *The Mask*, *Hank*, *Book of Comics*, *Book of All Comics*, *The Challenger*, *Children's Big Book*, *Circus Comics*, *Circus of Fun Comics*, *Black Swan Comics*, *Blazing Comics*, *Great Comics*, *Meteor Comics*, *Future World Comics*, *Witty Comics*, *Triple Threat*, *Hi-Lite Comics*, *Hi-Ho Comics*, *Tally-Ho Comics*, *Roly-Poly Comic Book*, *Eagle*, *Tailspin*, *Hurricane Comics*, *Jamboree*, *Tailspin Tommy*, *Red Band Comics*, *Red Circle Comics*, *Blue Circle Comics*, *Navy Heroes*, *El Bombo Comics*, *TNT Comics*, *Atomic Bomb*, *The Atomic Thunderbolt*, *Stony Craig*, *Adventures of Patoruzu*, *Sharp Comics*, *Funny Bone*, *Slapstick Comics*, *The Weekender*, *The Nebbs*, *Star Studded*, *KO Comics*, *Kayo*, *All-Great Comics*, *Jest*, *Jester*, *Zoom Comics*, *Snap*, *Snappy Comics*, *Vic Jordan*, *Merry Comics*, *Merry Go Round*, *Hooray Comics*, *Sky Rocket*, *Kiddo Kapers*, *Kiddie Kapers*, *Komik Pages*, *Columbia Comics*, *Key Comics*, *Gold Medal Comics*, *Liberty Comics*, *Funland Comics*, *Flyin' Jenny*, *Bulls-Eye Comics*, *Major Victory Comics*, *Dime Comics*, *Candy*, *Lucky Comics*, *Lucky "7" Comics*, *Cannonball Comics*, *Power Comics*, *Puppet Comics*, *Comic Land*, *Miss Cairo Jones*, *Top Spot Comics*, *All Top*, *All Great*, *Cryin' Lion*, *Krazy Life*, *Spook Comics*, *Spooky Mysteries*, *Mad Hatter*, *Your United States*, *World Famous Stories*, and the strange case of Holyoke's *Very Best Sure Fire*, which also exists in another cover-state under the title, *Very Best Sure Shot*.

Some of these titles may not be printed on black market paper, but might simply be new publishers jumping into the post-war field only to discover they could not buy the paper to continue operations.

For instance, William H. Wise produced at least two giant titles, *Complete Book of Comics and Funnies* and *America's Biggest Comics Book* which appear to be the contents of never-released runs of abortive Nedor titles. It's as if Nedor planned to launch a spate of books, could not come up with enough paper, cut a deal with publisher Wise to salvage the material in these unusually large one-shots. One was a whopping 196 pages! Postwar, some of his characters, like Wonder Man, landed back where they belonged—in Nedor titles.

Other oddball comics appear to be "rebounds"—old returned comics with new covers slapped on to satisfy the

distributor's need for reliable off-sale dates. Still others were Canadian imports. In most cases, they were uniformly cheesy and badly-titled. Those that lasted more than two issues had long, suspicious gaps in their release sequence.

Take Consolidated's *Lucky Comics*. Issue 1 bore a January 1944 cover-date. *Lucky Comics* #2 didn't show up until Summer 1945. Consolidated's *Key Comics* also skipped many months between issues. *Vic Verity Magazine* was launched in 1945. It wasn't until the end of 1946 that issue 2 of this pseudo-Fawcett book straggled out. Five months passed between Enwil Associate's *Blazing Comics* #3 and #4 in 1944-45. The same gap passed between Holyoke's first three issues of *Power Comics* and the tardy issue 4.

Presumably, paper issues were behind these mysterious gaps.

The federal comics confiscation may also explain the proliferation of oddball oversized comics that abounded in that era as well. There are several instances of annual-sized titles containing two or three regular-sized comics bound together. If it's true that some publishers were able to recover their seized titles after a year or so, then stripping the dated covers and rebinding them would be a quick and dirty way to get them on the stands. In some cases, these non-reprint "rebounds" represent seized comics abandoned by their originator and purchased at auction for rebinding and resale.

This explains some discrepancies between covers and indicia found in this era, as in *Great Comics* #1, which exists in three different states. Copies have been reported where the indicia have been blacked out and the titles *Knockout* and *Barrel O' Fun* have been obscured. No such comics are listed in Overstreet. These can only be recycled black market confiscations.

Great Comics was published by Novak, AKA Jubilee and Barrel O' Fun, which appear to be related to R. B. Leffingwell. Leffingwell, in turn, has been linked to Spotlight, although only through features that jump between their titles.

Spotlight's *Latest Comics* changed publisher with issue 2, dated simply 1945. Its indicia also has Jubilee blacked out. Palace Promotions was the "official" publisher.

Latest #2

featured Bee-28, the Bombadier, a character who had appeared in his own Neal one-shot earlier in the year. Two years later, F. E. Howard released the suspected third issue under the title, *Super Duper Comics*.

Numerous publishers were involved in this list of nearly 100 oddball comics, yet these titles might all have been created by the same low-rent editorial mind. What seasoned publisher would have coined *El Bombo Comics*? Or *Laffy-Daffy Comics*?

But nowhere else in the long history of comic books have so many strange commercial flops appeared in the same short time frame by such a collection of unknown quick-buck companies. Croyden, Cima, Gerona, Neal, Novak, New Age, Orbit, Rural Home, Enwil, Pentagon, Orbit, Cambridge House, Almanac, Round, Bernard Baily Publications, Frances M. McQueeny, H. C. Blackerby, George H. Doherty—the list goes on.

A suspicious number of them contain the work of gadfly artist L. B. Cole, who was running a shop at that time. Many appear to have been produced by notorious packager/publisher Harry "A" Chesler, whose planned Dynamic line of 14 new titles never got completely off the ground in 1941—perhaps curtailed by Pearl Harbor. Chesler was simply dumping that stuff out now that the postwar market had opened up. Chesler is also suspected of being behind Spotlight Comics—if only because he published a comic book by that title. But this can't be confirmed.

Scoop Comics was typical of Chesler's musical chairs publishing strategy. Hit by the paper shortage in 1943, it coverts to a paper-conserving digest called *Yankee Comics* for four issues, reverts to *Scoop* for one 1944 issue, then is reconstituted as *Snap* for one issue. After that it rides the re-titling rollercoaster: It's *Jest* for one month, *Komik Pages* for two, *Bulls-eye Comics* for one, then *Kayo*, and finally *Carnival Comics*.

Enwil/Rural Home's *Red Band Comics* and *Red Circle Comics* both start off unremarkably in 1945. But for some weird reason the February 1945 (#2) *Red Band* bears the exact same cover as #1. Only the issue number has been changed. The April 1945 issue (#3) is reprinted a month later as issue 4, with a May date. Captain Wizard, the star of *Red Band*, reappears in L. L. Baird's *Meteor Comics* one-shot in November. *Meteor* #1 may simply be the real *Red Band* #4. Captain Wizard returned in his own title, in an undated 1946 one-shot, as well as in Century Publications' April 1946 one-shot, *Three Ring Comics*. (Strangely, Spotlight had released its own *Three Ring Comics* one-shot the previous year, but it was a funny animal title.) As mentioned, Enwil's *Blazing Comics* mysteriously skipped five months between issues 3 and 4.

Do a little digging and you'll discover that publisher Lindsay L. Baird got into legal trouble over paper control violations. In March 1945, Baird and his company, Rewl Publications of 500 Fifth Avenue, New York City, were charged with the unauthorized use of 306 and a half tons of paper in 1944, specifically in printing the June, July and September issues of *Blazing Comics* and *Blue Circle Comics*. These were the first Enwil Associates publications.

This almost certainly explains the sudden cessation of the entire Enwil/Rural Home Publications group that spring. Other titles which also suddenly ceased with March or May 1945 issues were *Red Circle*, *Red Band*, *Eagle*, *Cannonball*, *Taffy*, *Funland*, *Laffy-Daffy* and *Mask Comics*. Most of these bore the Rural Home imprint, Enwil having been abandoned, apparently when it got into paper trouble in 1944.

Baird faced six counts, each carrying a maximum of one year in jail and a $10,000 fine per violation. He went on trial that June. Summing up the government's

case, Assistant United States Attorney Frederick J. Waters reminded the jury, "Newsprint quotas are important because the same material used to make newsprint is also used to pack blood plasma, K rations, vaccines, shell cases and bomb bands."

On June 18, 1945, Rewl was found guilty of having exceeded its newsprint quota in violation of the Second War Powers Act. A week later, Judge Grover M. Moscowitz sentenced Lindsay L. Baird to 60 days in prison—an extremely light sentence under the circumstances. Rewl was fined only $20,000.

You can only imagine Lindsay Baird's feelings on the matter: he was going to jail for having published what must be one of the worst super-heroes of the Golden Age of Comics, *Blazing Comics*' the Green Turtle!

But the worst humiliation was yet to come. In his final comment on the matter, Assistant U. S. Attorney Waters said, "The defendant in this case is a contumacious chiseler."

That may be, but Baird was back on the streets by fall. And back in business. Operating as L. L. Baird, Croyden and other allied entities, he released *Meteor Comics*. Other titles apparently connected to his operation also begin popping up in this timeframe. Captain Wizard also reappeared in Croydon's *Atomic Bomb Comics*. Characters like the villainous Santanas, Dr. Mercy, and a Spirit clone called The Bogeyman from *Red Band* resurfaced in Carlton's *Zoom* and *Merry Comics*, both dated December 1945. Whether this is another L. L. Baird corporation or not, Carlton never released another title. These characters also showed up in *Great Comics*, which was a Novak/Jubilee book.

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Frazetta's Fairy Tale

by DAVE WINIEWICZ

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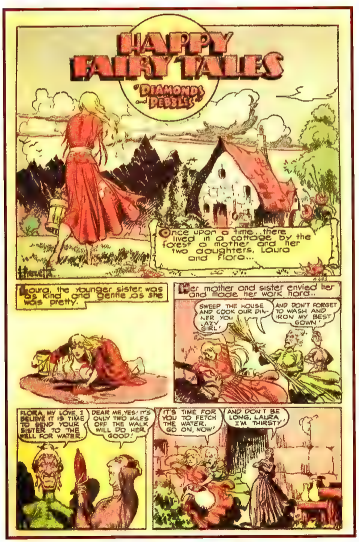
Frank Frazetta began his professional career at the incredibly young age of 15 with *Tally-Ho* #1 in 1944. John Giunta saw something in the boy and allowed the young Frazetta to contribute figure work and pencils to the Snowman feature in that book.


HAPPY FAIRY TALES
"DIAMONDS and PEARLS"
Once upon a time, there lived in a cottage by the forest a mother and her two daughters, Laura and Flora...
Laura, the younger sister was as kind and gentle as she was pretty
Her mother and sister envied her and made her work hard...
SWEEP THE HOUSE AND COOK OUR DINNER, GIRL!
AND DON'T FORGET TO WASH AND IRON MY BEST GOWN, GIRL!
FLORA MY LOVE, I BELIEVE IT IS TIME FOR YOUR BATH! YOU'LL FIND PLENTY OF WATER!
DEAR ME, YES! IT'S ONLY TWO MILES DOWN THE HILL TO THE WELL! GOOD!
IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO GO TOO, LAURA! THE WELL IS ON NOW!
AND DON'T BE LONG, LAURA! I'M THIRSTY!

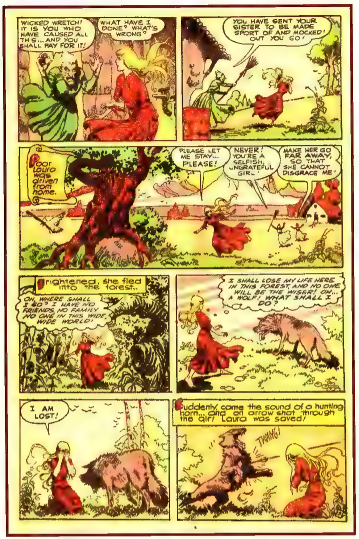
After a long, weary walk...
At the very moment that Laura was filling her pitcher...
OH, THERE'S THE WELL AT LAST! I DO HOPE I'LL NOT BE LATE IN RETURNING... THEY'LL BE ANGRY WITH ME!
HELLO, PRETTY ONE!
OH! WHO'S THERE?
I'M JUST AN OLD, OLD WOMAN, DEARIE, AND I'VE WALKED A LONG, LONG WAY! WOULD YOU GIVE ME A DRINK FROM YOUR PITCHER?
YES, WITH ALL MY HEART!
POOR OLD LADY. YOU ARE TIRED AND WORN. THIS WILL REFRESH YOU!
THANK YOU, DEARIE. NOW HELP ME TO MY FEET!
YOU ARE WELCOME! HERE, PUT YOUR ARM ABOUT MY NECK...
I HOPE YOU ARE RESTED NOW AND FEEL BETTER!
YOU ARE A GOOD, SWEET GIRL WITH A KIND & GENTLE HEART. I SHALL MAKE YOU A GIFT!
YOU SEE, I AM REALLY A FAIRY! I TOOK THIS HEAVY DISGUISE TO SEE HOW GIRL AND PO-LITE TO A POOR OLD WOMAN! AND NOW... MY GIFT!
FROM NOW ON YOU SHALL HAVE THE POWER TO TURN PEBBLES INTO JEWELS!

And so Laura pushes Portia... and then...
I'LL TURN THESE PEBBLES INTO DIAMONDS AND GIVE THEM TO HER... PERHAPS THEY'LL SHOW ME MORE KINDNESS THEN.
YOU BAD LAZY SLUT! CREATURE! WHY WERE YOU SO LONG? AND WHERE'S MY DRINK, PEBBLES? THE HOUSE
I BEG YOUR PARDON MOTHER, FOR NOT MAKING MORE HASTE, BUT-
WHAT IS THIS I SEE? THE PEBBLES HAVE TURNED INTO JEWELS! PRAY, HOW IS THIS?
AT THE WELL I GAVE WATER TO AN OLD LADY AND-
PEARLS! RUBIES! DIAMONDS! OH! WHAT A TREASURE!
Then Laura's tale had been told...
WHAT! YOU NOT WANT ME TO GO AND DRAW WATER?
WOULD YOU NOT BE GLAD TO HAVE THE SAME GIFT AS YOUR SISTER? GO, MY CHILD!
SILLY CHILD! YOU NEED A DRINK BEFORE YOU DRAW WATER FROM THE WELL! AND WHEN A POOR WOMAN ASKS FOR SOME, GIVE IT TO HER KINDLY!
HARK! AM I A SERVANT?
YOU SHALL GO! AND THIS VERY MINUTE!
OH, VERY WELL BUT I SHALL HATE IT!
And so, Flora mumbled and grumbled her way to the well...
FAIRY, INDEED! POLITENESS, INDEED! THIS SORT OF WORK IS NOT FOR ME!

Just as the pitcher was filled...
GOOD DAY, MY DEAR!
WHO'S THERE?
CAN YOU SPARE ME A SIP OF WATER, PLEASE?
I AM NOT A SERVANT GIRL TO WAIT UPON PEOPLE! IF YOU WISH SOME WATER, HELP YOURSELF!
WOULD YOU NOT RATHER GIVE ME SOME WATER?
HARK! YOU MAY DRINK FROM MY PITCHER IF YOU WISH! I WILL NOT SERVE YOU!
INSOLENT GIRL, YOU ARE PROUD AND RUDE. I AM A FAIRY! HAS TAKEN THE DRESS OF A PRINCESS TO MAKE SURE HOW THE POOR WORLD GOES!
YOU, TOO, SHALL HAVE A GIFT FROM ME! WHATEVER YOU TO-DAY THAT IS OF VALUE WILL TURN TO PEBBLES IN YOUR HANDS!
Coming the fairy Flora went home...
WELL, MY CHILD, DID YOU MEET HER? DID SHE GIVE YOU A GIFT?
HERE! SAVE SOME JEWELS AND ADD TO OUR STORE OF PRECIOUS GEMS!
OH! MERCY! WHAT'S THIS? THE JEWELS HAVE TURNED INTO PEBBLES!
THE FAIRY WAS RIGHT!

The story was Frazetta's own creation. At that moment, an amazing career was launched that continues to the present day. Long before the incredible oils and the extraordinary brush drawings, the early Frazetta produced scores of funny animal stories and charming text head illustrations for a wide variety of comic books such as *Barnyard*, *Coo Coo*, *Goofy* and *Happy Comics*.

The rarest of all Frazetta comics is *Happy Comics* #33 from September 1949. It has always been a comic in great demand and short supply. *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* has consistently listed it as Rare. It contains two Frazetta stories and several text head pieces. One of the stories is a treasure: it is entitled "Diamonds and Pebbles," a six-page story that re-tells the Cinderella fairy tale with a few Frazetta modifications. This story has circulated among Frazetta collectors by Xerox for years. An obscure Italian fanzine published it in Italian over 25 years ago. Many collectors have never seen this story and it is presented here for the first time in over 50 years. The story is filled with all those Frazetta "touches" that would become his


WICKED WRETCH! IT IS YOU WHO HAVE CAUSED ALL THIS—AND YOU SHALL PAY FOR IT!
WHAT HAVE I DONE? WHAT'S WRONG?
YOU HAVE SENT YOUR SISTER TO BE MADE SPORT OF AND MOCKED! OUT YOU GO!
GOOD LORD WHAT WITCH? FIGHT ALONE.
PLEASE LET ME STAY... PLEASE!
NEVER! YOU'RE A FOOLISH AND HEARTLESS GIRL.
TAKE HER GO AWAY SO THAT SHE CANNOT DISGRACE ME!
Frightened, she fled into the forest.
OH, WHERE SHALL I GO? I SHALL BE LOST AND ALONE IN THIS WIDE, WIDE WORLD!
I SHALL LOSE MY LIFE HERE IN THIS FOREST AND NO ONE WILL BE THE WISER! OH... A WOLF! WHAT SHALL I DO?
I, AM LOST!
Suddenly came the sound of a hunting horn...and an arrow shot through the air! Laura was saved!
THWIP!

THE WOLF HAS BEEN SLAIN! WHO HAS SAVED MY LIFE? IT MUST BE SOME MIGHTY HUNTSMAN TO HAVE KILLED SUCH A BEAST!
AND WHO IS THIS BEAUTIFUL MAIDEN WHO CHANCES FLEEING TO JEWELS?
OH, THANK YOU, YOUR HIGHNESS, I AM A SIMPLE MAIDEN OF THE FOREST.
HOW CAME YOU HERE?
AH
Laura told the young prince her adventures...
...AND SO, THEY SENT ME FROM THE HOUSE, NEVER TO RETURN.
THIS IS NO OR DINARY BEAUTY! SHE HAS GROWN UP IN A REGAL WAY! A TREASURE, WHO'S KINDNESS AND KNOWLEDGE...
FAIR LAURA I HAVE HEARD YOUR STORY AND LOOKED UPON YOUR FACE AND FALLEN IN LOVE WITH YOU! WILL YOU MARRY ME?
I SHALL BE SO PROUD AND HAPPY TO BE YOUR WIFE!
I SHALL TAKE YOU TO THE PALACE OF MY FATHER THE KING, AND THERE WE SHALL BE WED!
GLORIA- FOR OUR PRINCESS!
WELCOME PRINCESS LAURA
And thus was King Louis was carried off to become a Princess...
While rude, selfish Flora remained at home, unable to touch anything of value lest it turn into pebbles!

artistic signature in the coming years, i.e. fantasy settings, a beautiful princess, wolves, ornate vegetation—and he even added a wonderful homage to Hal Foster by drawing Prince Valiant in the last page as the prince who rescues the princess.

This comic book fairy tale, of course, has a happy ending. Unfortunately, there is another side to this story that doesn't end on such a happy note. In the early 1950s, artist and friend Ralph Mayo told Frank how much he loved the "Diamonds and Pebbles" story. Frazetta presented Ralph the original art pages as a gift. Ralph was speechless and treasured the art until his untimely death a few years later. Sadly, much of Ralph's artwork was thrown to the curb by people going through his possessions, including that Frazetta story, numerous Hal Foster *Tarzan* pages from 1932 and other cherished gems. Frazetta attempted to retrieve those pages shortly after Ralph's passing, but he arrived too late. Frazetta arrived one day after the garbage men had picked it all up. It was lost to history. Luckily the comic survives and we can still enjoy the story and the art. ☠

Jingle Jangle #40 (Aug 1949) The cover gag is pedestrian, as is the rendering, which, save for George Carlson's transforming contributions, just about sums up the insides as well.

Weird Words

continued from page 32

astounding anthropomorphisms, ludicrous literalisms and a morass of marmalade that mires the corn doctor and thwarts his plans to steal the three blue wishes!

Jingle Jangle Tales #40 (Aug 1949) is the second to the last issue. Although only the first six issues had Carlson covers his two strips continued, a little shorter and a little less surreal (they could hardly get more surreal!), but still vastly entertaining. In fact, the more straightforward plotting of the later tales is in some ways even more compelling. The Pie-Face Prince is still consorting with Princess Pannetella—this month's story line has him frantic when the royal carpet-sweeper that he was fixing for her birthday gets stolen. And even though the sabotaged sweeper explodes all ends snappily because they find King Hokum's missing million-dollar bill inside!

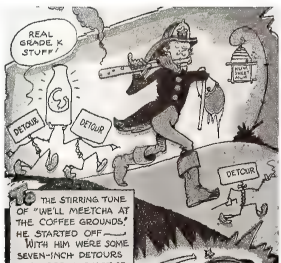
The "supporting" features are all pretty pathetic with no Rubberman around this time (nor even Butty and Fatty), but secreted amongst them is a worthy "Jingle Jangle Tale," "The Zheckered Zultan and his Three Little Zulteens." It's a simple story of three boys, a vanilla-flavored crown, a teapot full of cash and a green-whiskered cab driver.

Although lower-grade copies of the later *Jingle Jangles* aren't expensive books, the best introduction to Carlson's work for that title is probably the three stories reprinted in *The Smithsonian Book of Comic Book Comics* (1981), a superb compilation where Captain Marvel and the Spirit rub shoulders with Little Lulu and Pogo.

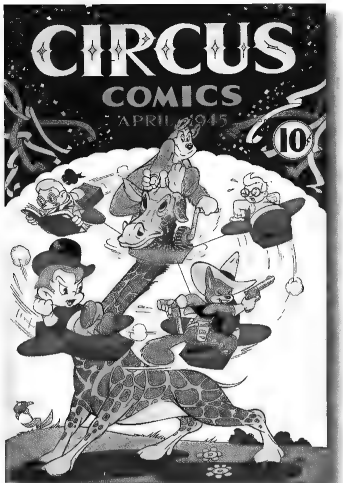
George Carlson was also the creator of several books of puzzles, and during the 1930s produced the work that is his other claim to fame, illustrations for a series of Uncle Wiggily books published by Platt and Munk. Howard Garis' "long-eared gentleman" had been a family favorite since 1910, and with Carlson's rendition the rheumatic rabbit and his animal friends finally found their perfect visual expression. Carlson may even have sharpened his appetite for the absurd from association with Garis who ended the Wiggily stories with surreal sendoffs like, "And, if the loaf of bread doesn't get a toothache and jump out of the oven into the dishpan I'll tell you about…." Garis was also, under the pen name Victor Appleton, the author of the first series of Tom Swift books.

In terms of sales, however, the most-purchased piece of art by George Carlson was a drawing for the dust-jacket of the first novel by Margaret Mitchell, a saga of Southern families and a lifestyle changed forever by the Civil War. *Gone With the Wind* sold over a million copies within months of publication in 1936.

George Carlson and *Jingle Jangle* are both "long ago and far away," but Pretzleburg is still there, awaiting reprints of these wonderful tales so "tourists" can happily wander its nonsensical streets. And one can only hope that King Hokum hasn't had to break his million-dollar bill, and if he did, then hope that he brought the royal wheelbarrow!


REAL GRANDMA STUFF!
DETOUR
DETOUR
DETOUR
THE STIRRING TUNE OF "WE'LL MEETCHA AT THE COFFEE GROUNDS," HE STARTED OFF — WITH HIM WERE SOME SEVEN-INCH DETOURS WHO BORE A QUART OF MOIST MOONLIGHT —

This choice panel from *Jingle Jangle* #5 via the Smithsonian Book of Comic Book Comics is an extreme example of Carlson's patented plot "detours," a device he used more often in the earlier issues, perhaps changing style when the books went from 64 to 48 pages.



Black Marketer
continued from page 45

But Carlton is believed to be related to Gerona, which produced *KO Comics* and *Triple Threat* late in 1945, featuring the Duke of Darkness and the Menace. Both characters also surfaced in Top Spot's *Top Spot Comics* one-shot, which was nothing more than a reprint of *KO Comics* with a new cover.

Baird seems to have been behind Enwil Associates in all of its incarnations, and was probably the most notorious Black Marketer in comics. Covers to the *Red Circle* #4 and *Blazing Comics* #5 and #6, as well as the unpublished *Blue Circle Comics* #6 turned up in 1955 wrapped around returns of other publishers' titles.

No dislocated issue of *Blazing Comics* has ever surfaced, but there is an interesting oddity with #5. When it straggled out after a gap of several months, the interior lacked page one of the lead Green Turtle story and the final page of the last story in the issue is also missing. Obviously they were meant to appear on the inside covers. More remarkable is the title running across the top of every page. It doesn't say *Blazing Comics*. It says "Cloak and Dagger"- a non-existent title! Are we looking at another seized and rebound title here? Probably.

A variant *Blazing* #5 with a different mix of stories has also turned up. It too says "Cloak and Dagger" atop each page. It appears that two issues were printed, then salvaged as *Blazing Comics*.

At no other time in comics history was the line between publishers more blurred. Characters and strips which had been running in one title, pop up in others apparently published by affiliated or possibly surrogate houses.

For example, Green Publishing's *Roly Poly Comic Book*, which ran for 15 issues in 1945-46 and reprinted MLJ superheroes, is somehow connected to Baird. Two of his characters, Blue Circle and Steel Fist, take over issues 5 and 15. They're refugees from *Blue Circle Comics* and may represent suppressed or confiscated issues. Green's *Liberty Comics* #5 features the Prankster from Enwil's *Red Circle Comics*. Many of the stories in this issue end with a note to read the next issue of *Red Circle Comics*, so it can only be a "lost" issue repackaged. *Liberty* too was otherwise an MLJ reprint title.

Another oddity was Rural Home's *Mask Comics*. Overstreet lists #2 (Apr/May 1945) as scarce. A second #2 was released with no publisher indicated, but dated Fall 1945. Undoubtedly, the first #2 was seized. *Mask* #2 continues the lineup of characters, Black Raider, Chin Cop, Merlin the Boy Magician and others, from *Power Comics*. *Power* had started off as a Holyoke title, but resumed after a pause as a Narrative title. Narrative may be another Baird offshoot.

To confuse matters even more, the Airmale feature from Jay Burtis' *Atomic Bomb* also appeared in Cima Publications' *Snappy Comics*. Both were undated 1945 releases. Burtis is thought to have a Baird connection, but Cima doesn't. Collectors link Cima to Prize Comics.

Most of these held-up titles probably hit the stands between fall 1945 and spring 1946. Baird titles trickled out, like *Variety Comics*. Since it was an annual, there's no interruption in its frequency. By mid-1946, revived Rural Home/Baird titles like *Patches* and *Taffy* are issued by Orbit, but it's impossible to tell if this is yet another Baird operation, or if Orbit bought out the liquidated publisher. Orbit also took over Toy Town's *Toy Town Comics*, reviving *Taffy*'s Wiggles the Wonderworm.

LaSalle released an undated *Merry-Go-Round* in 1944. Two years later, another apparent Baird company, Croyden, issued a completely different #1 of the same title. And in 1947, Rotary Litho released a third *Merry-Go-Round* #1—bearing the same logo as the LaSalle edition. Rotary Litho was probably a printer who got stuck with undistributed comic books in lieu of payment. Number 2 finally came out in 1948. That may have been the last of whatever remained of Lindsay Baird's mini-empire.

As for the other known paper violators, they briefly bobbed up before going down for the last time.

The teenage star of Spotlight's *Topsy-Turvy*, Cookie, got his own title in 1946. The publisher was Michel Publications.

The title later became an ACG book. A third issue of *Jeep* finally straggled out in 1948. The publisher of record was R. B. Leffingwell. Those seem to have been their last foray into comics.

One can easily speculate why some of these titles lacked issue numbers. Whatever Federal authorities were policing the nation's newsstands were no doubt alert to any new #1s popping up on the scene. It was tantamount to a red flag, and may have prompted an investigatory audit. The absent dates may have been a hedge to allow more on-sale rack time, as well as further confuse the watchers. In later years, publishers like DC and Nedor avoided numbering first issues to give distributors and readers the impression that the title was already established. The practice began as a legal dodge, but gained legitimacy as a publishing tactic.

But the saga does not conclude here, for this brief period was one of the most critical in comic book history.

When the US Army Air Force dropped those atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, they did more than bring World War II to a sudden fiery conclusion. They ended the Golden Age of Comics and ushered in the Atom Age of Comics.

That August, just in time for the fall, paper controls were relaxed. In the aftermath, the comics world was turned upside down.

Writer's Digest reported in November 1945, "With the end of paper-controls in sight, publishers are building up inventory in order to get going at the first moment possible. Right now, they seem to find press-time more of a problem than paper supply."

The most ambitious plans were already in the works.

"Fawcett has definite plans for putting out 28 comic books as fast as paper and press time permit," revealed Harriet Bradfield. "Of these, 12 will be monthlies, the rest quarterlies. Part are new titles, others revivals. Books will be increased to 64 pages each, with two bi-monthlies of 96 pages. By December four new comics will be out: *Mary Marvel Comics*, *George Pal Puppetoons*, *Marvel Family Comics*, *Hoppy the Marvel Bunny*—all monthlies. *Captain Marvel Adventures* will become a semi-monthly book."

A huge post-war gearing-up was under way. Not only in comics, but in magazine publishing across the board. In addition to Fawcett, Harvey, Parents Magazine, Lloyd Jacquet and others all announced new titles, or revivals of old ones. Most never rolled off the presses. A few leaked out an issue or two, but that was all. Fawcett's grandiose plans simply collapsed. While they did release new titles, they were few. Even the expanded semi-monthly *Captain Marvel Adventures* proved to be a short-lived experiment.

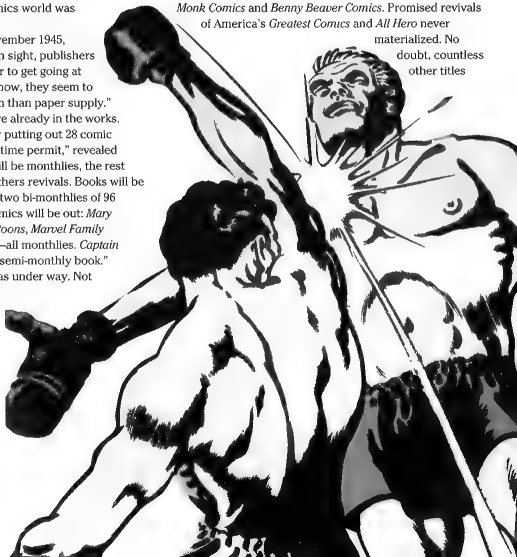
As *Writer's Digest* reported in March 1946:

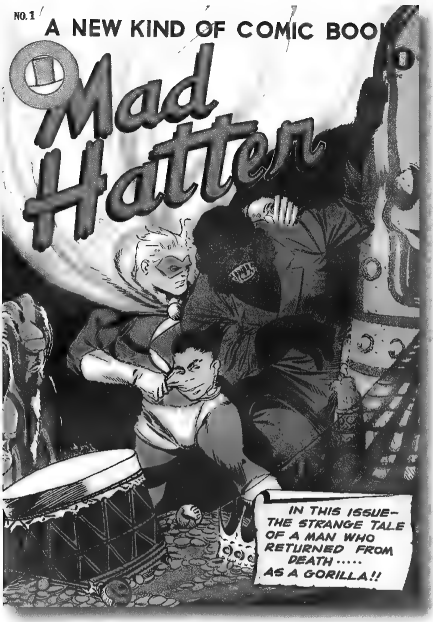
"The end of paper control enormously increased the troubles of magazine publishers. Practically every office I visited in the past weeks has had a sad tale to tell. And this has included many well-established magazines, as well as newcomers.

"Several of the titan publishers had been bidding for paper mills and paper jobbing houses. Whereby, smaller companies have lost out on sources of paper believed secure. And the lack of magazine printing presses is almost enough to wring tears from the sympathetic listener.

"As a consequence, many publishers who had announced plans for stepping up frequency of production on many magazines, has beat a hasty retreat. If an editor has told you one week that he can buy as much material as you will turn out, and a week later informed you that he is so sorry, but—don't blame him."

Among the casualties were Harvey's *Boy Explorers* and *Stuntman*—dead after two issues, as well as titles like *Strange Story*, *Flyin' Fool*, *Boy Heroes* and others never released. Aborted new Fawcett titles included the unissued *Sherlock Monk Comics* and *Benny Beaver Comics*. Promised revivals of America's *Greatest Comics* and *All Hero* never materialized. No doubt, countless other titles





from other houses slated for revival in the postwar comic book sweepstakes also fell by the wayside.

Between the scramble for paper, the struggle over press time, and the flood of new product, disaster loomed. This was a pivotal time for comics. The first magazine glut in U.S. history was brewing.

It wasn't just a comics phenomenon, but comic books were in the thick of it. Thinking that post-war magazine sales would continue, or even exceed, wartime levels, publishers jumped into the magazine business with both feet, including an obscure house run by Adrian Lopez that was funded by race track winnings, and named after the victorious horse, Volitant.

"Volitant is a fair sample of the present confused state of publishing," wrote David A. Munro in "Magazine Ferment" (*New Republic*, April 15, 1946). "Strange titles have jostled for position on the newsstands while the best-known magazines went under the counter out of sight, like butter or nylons. Those put out front were named, among other things, *Goofy Gags and Gals*, *Ribtickler Comics*, *Twinkle Comics* and *Murder Stalks the Mayor*.

"Naturally the explosion over Hiroshima produced a magazine called *The Atom*. Another came out called *Atom Bomb*, also one called *Atom*. The trade journal of the newsstand business lists 245 comic-book titles as appearing regularly. They all sell for a dime—except for two items known as *Wink* and *Titter*, for each of which readers put up 25 cents, and undoubtedly get their money's worth. In this field *Superman* has had the effect you would expect of so prodigious a personality. He has been followed not only by *Super Comics* and *Super Magician*, but by *Super Duck*, *Super Rabbit*, *Super Snipe* and *Super Mouse*, who attained his powers by eating super-cheese."

Within a month, according to *Newsweek*, the growing glut was approaching critical mass.

"Comics and one-shot pulps have piled up so high fore and aft of counters that dealers have complained of their cluttered stands, and distributors moaned they cannot keep up with returns. As one distributor put it: 'Our route and promotion men are fed up attempting to appease irate dealers (whose) racks look as though a cyclone has just passed over them.'"

Publisher's Weekly added this in their June 8, issue:

"Certain categories have been especially hit. Comic magazines have been piling up 40-60 per cent return totals, as against perhaps 5 per cent during the war. In addition, the size of the average comic has dropped to 32 pages for a dime, as against a former size of from 48 to 64 pages."

Time jumped on the story two weeks later in a piece that seems to have ransacked the *New Republic* article.

"The comics were hit first," *Time* reported on June 17, 1946. "Outgrowing the moppet market, they tapped a ready-made public: the soldiers loved them. At the peak, when anything from *Supersnipe* to *Super Duck* would move, sales had hit 40 million a month. Now they were down to 27 million, and still skidding. War-born pulps were going begging, too. One firm, whose stable of magazine goes up and down at the drop of a dime, had dumped 64 titles (*Green*

Mask Comics, *Sleepy Time Stories*, etc.). But buyers still had 1,200 titles to choose from."

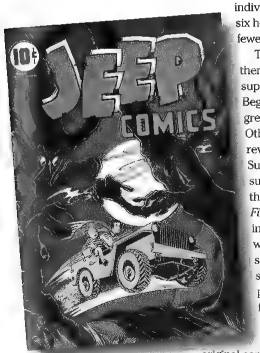
That publisher was of course Victor Fox, returned from the war.

And thus was born the first great comic book glut. The bottom simply dropped out on comics sales. There had been a mini-glut back in 1941-42, but normal market forces soon stabilized the field, with weaker titles and publishers quickly dropping from sight.

This time it was a bloodbath. Some blamed the rush to expand, others the loss of the soldier-reader. Some pointed to the unusually hot weather of the summer of 1946, and the usual autumn falloff in sales. But the reasons were not as important as the reality of what had taken place. And it was grim.

The larger houses coped in different ways. Most cut their 52 page magazines down to 32 pages. A few were rumored to have bought Canadian forests for their paper potential. But the little guys were clobbered. Among them was Lindsay L. Baird. Fresh out of jail, he started up operations only to walk into a firestorm of crushing business conditions.

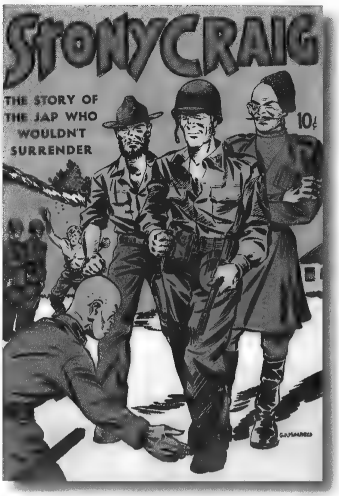
Of the publishing entities that issued comic books in 1946, 34 produced eight or fewer individual issues. Twenty-six houses put out three or fewer comics.



The biggest casualty of them all would be the super-hero himself. Beginning in 1946-47, a great die-off commenced. Other genres would revitalize comic books. Superman and Batman survived, of course. In the shrunken *World's Finest Comics*, their individual features would be merged into a single team-up story to save space. The powerful DC Comics finally cancelled a title. It was the one that started it all—the first original comic book. *More Fun Comics* was finally laid to rest at the end of 1947.

As always, survival of the fittest ruled. The strong got stronger. The weak died off. In 1944, 1,123 individual comics books were published. This increased by only eight titles in 1945.

But beginning in 1946, it jumped to 1,548 titles, exploding every year thereafter until literally doubling by 1949. The willingness to explore new genres at the expense of the super-hero saved the day. Comics were booming once again. Perhaps they sold fewer issues per title, but that problem was solved the traditional way, magazine style. Publish more titles.

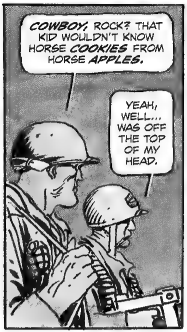


A possible last gurgle of the glut was the spate of no-number one- and two-shots released by Four Star in 1947, among them, *Daffy Tunes Comics*, *Hi-Ho Comics* and *Top Flight Comics*. *Captain Flight* and *Top Flight* had previously stopped at the end of 1945, only to resurface briefly. Four Star was an early Robert Farrell company. Several announced 1947 titles, like *Dandee* and *Jolly Comics*, were never released.

Among the casualties of that brief but historic boom-turned-bust-turned-boom again were scads of reclaimed and recycled Black Market comic books, recovered and rebound, displaced in time and unrecorded by history for what they truly were—the last dying gasp of the Golden Age of Comics.

The full story behind these fugitive publications may never be fully documented. But one thing is certain: collectors seeking new and exciting thrills need look no further than the quest for Black Market comic books of the Golden Age!

(Special thanks to Pat Calhoun, Michelle Nolan, Michael Feldman and Dan Stevenson for their research help.)



War and Remembrance

Joe Kubert on "Yossel: April 19, 1943" and "Sgt. Rock: Between Hell and a Hard Place"

interview conducted by Bill Baker

Joe Kubert is one of the hardest working creators in comics today. Still, that statement should come as no real surprise, particularly since he's remained one of the industry's most dependable draftsmen since he first entered the field in the 1940s. In fact, the truth of the matter is that, whether he was telling the adventures of the Justice Society of America during the Golden Age, crafting war stories featuring the Enemy Ace and Sgt. Rock during the Silver Age, or creating from whole cloth the tales of Tor (his creator-owned prehistoric Everyman) at various times in his long career, comics fans have known all along that they'll get impeccably staged storytelling, sturdy rendering and subtly nuanced expressions whenever Kubert signs his name to a page.

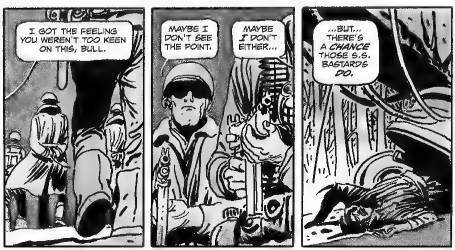
Long time fans and new readers alike are now getting a double dose of Kubert's majestic work with the release of not just one, but two original graphic novels from this living legend. The first of these is a project that's quite close to the artist's heart, and could easily be called a labor of love. The second marks his return to a genre at which he truly excels, and the reintroduction of perhaps the most popular of the iconic characters he's helped define over the years.

CBM: You've got a couple original graphic novels coming out, the long-awaited return to one of your seminal creations with *Sgt. Rock: Between Hell and a Hard Place*, and another one which I know holds a special place in your heart and which I'd like to start with, *Yossel*. Why is it such an important project to you?

Joe Kubert: Well, it kind of reflects feelings that I've had for a long time, and the kind of emotional impact that I keep harping back to in terms of my parents, and my father's decision to come here to the United States.... I have four sisters one sister who is older than I and three who are younger—and I remember sitting around the kitchen table with my mother and father, and very often all of us would ask, "Well, how was it in the Old Country? How did we get here? What was this all about?" And my parents would tell us that story, similar to what I've described in the front of the book. And that is that my parents left Europe not because they were so terribly destitute, or that it was that horrible for them. My mother's father was a veterinarian, and raised cattle. My father's father had a small grocer-type business. So they weren't really hard-put. My father, if he had decided to stay in Poland at that time, could probably, for a while, anyhow, have done pretty well. But he was adamant about getting out of that country, because...being married and having kids, he felt that coming to America would be of benefit to the kids; to be able to give them a chance to do things that, in a small town in Europe, might not be available to them.

As I described in the book, the first time they tried to leave, my mother was pregnant with me, and they sent her back. They sent her back to Poland. Afterwards she gave birth to me, and I was two or three months old when I came here. My father and my mother carried me to the boat and, second time around, they let us on the boat. We were able to get to the United States, where my parents were met by others in their family who had come here before them.

But the point is that doing this book was very meaningful to me, because I had often wondered, sitting and listening to my father, and having, [after] I got older, when I was about thirteen, fourteen and fifteen, some of the people


I GOT THE FEELING YOU WEREN'T TOO KEEN ON THIS, BULL.
MAYBE I DON'T SEE THE POINT.
MAYBE I DON'T EITHER...
...BUT... THERE'S A CHANCE THOSE S.O.B. BASTARDS DO.

SGT ROCK ™ & © DC COMICS

who came from Europe and who described what had happened to the town—this was 1939-1940, when the Holocaust really started—I'd think about this and I'd figure, "Gee whiz, if my parents hadn't come here, if my father hadn't decided that this was the place he wanted to have his family and raise his children, I wonder what would have happened?" And the answer to that, I guess, is in the book.

CBM: So, in a real sense, *Yossel* is a personal alternate history of you and your family, then.

Kubert: I'm pretty sure that.... Well, I don't know about this business of getting involved in the uprising in the ghetto. [Laughter] I don't know if I would take any part in that. I'm sure that we would have met the same kind of fate as my father's family. They were *all* wiped out. My mother's family, they were *all* wiped out. In fact, the town that we originally came from, the town of Yzeran, doesn't exist anymore. It was just wiped off the map completely. So I'm pretty sure that I wouldn't be sitting here talking to you right now, if my father hadn't decided to come to America at that time.

YOSSEL © 2003 JOE KUBERT

CBM: [After a pause] That kind of statement of fact just leaves me speechless. Creating this book must not just have been meaningful, it must have been hard, too. How difficult was it for you to work on the book because of the subject matter?

Kubert: I think like any other piece of work that anybody does, once you concentrate, once you're sitting and thinking about what it is that you have to do and how to put it down, so to speak, all other thoughts—the fearful thoughts, "Am I going to do this right?" or "Am I going to get this done?" or "What the heck is all this happening?" and writing about my mother and my father—all those thoughts kind of go to the back of your head. And I think it's true of any piece of work, any artist—anything that I'm doing, anyhow—I kind of concentrate on what it is I'm doing, getting the thing done.

I planned the book out. When I started, my first thoughts were to do a complete pencil and inking finish on the book. Then I felt that it would work better if these sketches that I had in the book really reflected those things that I might have done at that time. Then I took a couple steps previous to that, and figured, well, I might be doing drawings at the beginning that might be a little bit rougher than the ones that I really got into later on, where perhaps my work might have improved, or I might have been paying a little more attention to detail. I might have had more time to draw them. And I decided that the sense of the drawings would be more spontaneous, or get the feeling that it was happening at that time, if they were just in pencil rather than finished drawings. So all of these decisions were being made, or these things were things that I was thinking about, figuring out and concentrating on, so that all the emotional aspects of what I was doing, after I wrote the story, kind of took a back seat.

CBM: Did you do a lot of research?

Kubert: Yes, I sure did. I got a hold of some really good books to make sure about the Warsaw uprising, the people who were involved, what was actually happening in the camps, the different experiences that people [had] who were actually in those camps, what they had lived through. There are any number of good books that have been written about the Holocaust; I went through at least a dozen of them, and tried to make sure of dates, and events, and so on.

CBM: Did this develop in a typical way? How would it compare to your past work where you were basically working by yourself, like *Fax from Sarajevo* and such?

Kubert: Gee, I don't know. It's hard

for me to analyze that. I've been thinking about it for a long time. It's something that I felt I wanted to do. The time came up for me to do it. The book was finished…I guess I did it in about two or three years; it took me about a year, a year and a half to do. I started about two, three years ago. It's hard for me to say now exactly how I felt at that time.

CBM: It almost sounds like this is a book that you're doing for your family, in remembrance of them, as much as you are creating it for the ages, so to speak.

Kubert: I did it for myself. I really did it for myself. I'm lucky enough to not have to worry about keeping busy, or having work to do. I am, as I've mentioned many times before, one of the luckiest people in the world. At this stage of my career, my life, whatever, to *still* have people interested in having me do work, and wanting me to do it, I find to be one of the most fortunate things that could happen to anybody.

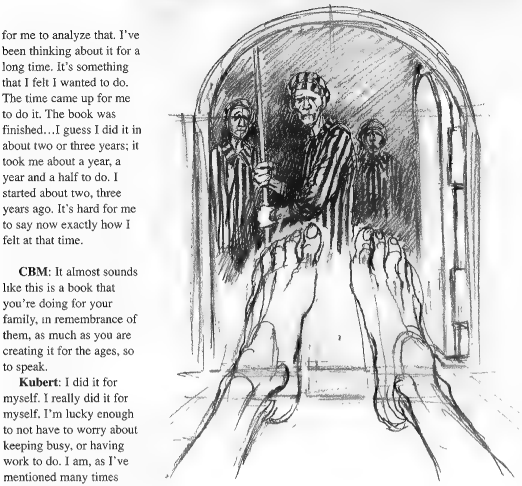
So, when I started this particular book, I wasn't hunting around for a publisher to do this. There were one or two others besides iBooks who were interested in doing it; some I had spoken to, some who had never even seen the book, and who might have been interested in doing it. I eventually ended up with Byron Preiss at iBooks through recommendation. I remember Byron, and we have always had an excellent relationship. I trust him implicitly. So I decided to go with him. But I did the book, not so much for its commercial aspects, as…

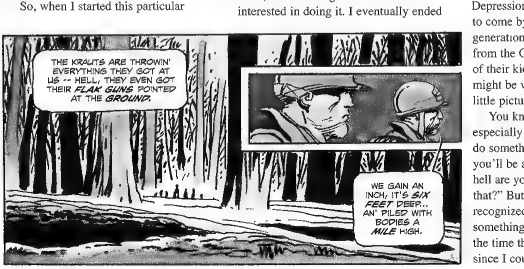
Look, it'd be great if the book has a certain amount of acceptance and recognition by others, but *that's* not as important to me—as corny as it sounds—that's not as important to me as knowing for *myself* that I did what I felt was a good job on this. I did what I felt I started out to do, and that is to record something that I felt very *deeply* about. I wanted to put it down on paper the best way I knew how.

CBM: What did you get out of doing this book?

Kubert: There's a certain amount of satisfaction that I got out of it, almost like a "Thank you" to my mother and father who have, even from the time I was a little kid, always encouraged me—my father especially. As the book describes, my father was a Kosher butcher. He worked like crazy during the Depression. Money was very, very hard to come by. And me being almost a first generation American, my folks coming from the Old Country, the fact that one of their kids—especially their son—might be wasting his time drawing crazy little pictures.

You know, most Europeans, especially at that time, figured, "Look, do something, or study something, where you'll be able to make a living! How the hell are you going to make a living doing that?" But my father, and my mother, recognized immediately that this was something I always loved to do. From the time that I was two years old, ever since I could hold a pencil or a piece of




THE KRAUTS ARE THROWIN' EVERYTHING THEY GOT AT US -- HELL, THEY EVEN GOT THEIR FLAK GUNS POINTED AT THE GROUND.
WE GAIN AN INCH, IT'S SIX FEET DEEP.. AN' PILED WITH BODIES A MILE HIGH.

chalk in my hand, and my father and my mother both always encouraged me. So doing this book was sort of a recognition of that, the fact that they did what they did.

I think they were the two bravest people in the world. Imagine taking a twenty-day boat trip across the ocean with two little kids—and I mean *little* kids—down in the hold of an old boat in about 1926, not really knowing, except for the fact that they did have family here in the United States, not knowing what the heck was going to happen, what they were going to do. I mean, that really took *guts*. And I felt this was just something that I should do, was all.

CBM: Do you think that the same could be said about the new *Sgt. Rock: Hell and a Hard Place* graphic novel?

Kubert: Oh, Sgt. Rock was a kick. Sgt. Rock was easy compared to this one, because it was written by a *terrific* writer, Brian Azzarello, who I had always had respect for. I had never met him before, but I had known of his stuff, and when the project appeared to come to a boil, and Brian was the guy that was going to write it, it was great. And the working relationship that I had with Brian, and with Karen [Berger], and with Will [Dennis], my editor, was just terrific. It was like working with a unit, and it was a pleasure. It was really, really a pleasure.

CBM: Did you and Brian work up the story together?

Kubert: No, no, no. We had discussed what the story would be, but very roughly. Brian just described what was going to be happening, speaking generally, just to let me know what he was intending to do. Because, speaking frankly, I was hesitant about getting in to do any kind of a Sgt. Rock-

type book. It was a character that I'd known for a long time, it was a character that Bob Kanigher had created and we had worked a long, long time, between the two of us, on it. And some things had been done with the Sgt. Rock character by DC Comics prior to this that I, well, not that I liked or disliked, I just *ignored* it. [Laughter] I just didn't bother looking at them, or reading them, simply because they were such extreme takeoffs from what Bob Kanigher and I had thought the character should be.

So, prior to working on *Between Hell and a Hard Place*, we discussed a little bit what he was going to do so I would know if this was the kind of story I wanted to do. And it was.

Brian is a terrific writer. I knew the characters, which Brian extended on. He *really* built the characters up. He did a terrific job of really developing *all* the guys in Easy Company, and Sgt. Rock. The dialogue, and the pacing, and the whole flavor of the story I thought was excellent.

CBM: Is there a particular reason this book is being published by Vertigo? Was that to allow the use of, shall we say "harsher language"?

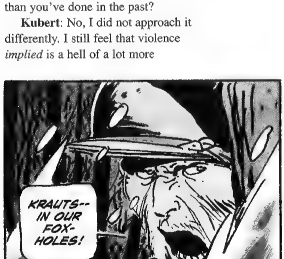
Kubert: *No*. [Laughter] It's funny you should bring that up because one of the things we talked about prior to Brian writing the book is he has heavy language in most of the stuff that he's done for Vertigo, especially in *100 Bullets*. I have no objection to that, and I certainly didn't want to put myself in the position of a censor, so I kind of said this hesitantly to Brian and to Karen; I said, "What I'm going to tell you may sound ridiculous, and narrow, and some sort of censorship, but all my life in the business I've *avoided* things like that." I just haven't done it. I just haven't *attached* myself to things of that ilk. Now we *know*, if we're doing a realistic story, which is what Brian did, and having been in the Army myself, [I know] guys talk. Nobody could curse better than I. I could cuss as good as

anybody. But when I come home to my family, I don't use that kind of language. And when I work in comic books, either showing violence that's off the wall, or sexual things off the wall, or language, for that matter, I just avoided it. There were reasons for it. I figured my parents would see it, my *kids* would see it, my *grandchildren* would see it, so I just wouldn't do it. So when the Sgt. Rock book came up, I said, "Well, it may sound childish, and I know that, in actuality, language like this is used by guys in the Army, but I can't do it. I just can't attach myself to a publication that would have that kind of language in it. I've never done it before, and I ain't going to start now." And Brian and Karen accommodated me. They said, "OK, if it bothers you, Joe, we'll leave them out." Now that doesn't mean there aren't words like "crap" and "hell" and things like that. But the harsher four letter words, there aren't any.

I FUMBLED IN MY POCKET... FOUND MY PENCIL STUB... UNCREASED THE SCRAP OF PAPER I ALWAYS CARRIED WITH ME. I WANTED TO DRAW A PICTURE OF PAPA, MAMA, CHAVA. I COULD SEE THEM CLEARLY IN MY MIND. THEIR FACES. THEIR EXPRESSIONS. THE WAY PAPA HALF-SMILED WHEN HE LOOKED AT MY DRAWINGS. THE SERIOUS LOOK IN MAMA'S EYE, AS IF DECIDING WHETHER MY DRAWING WAS ACCEPTABLE OR NOT. MY SISTER'S TEASING LOOK.

CBM: Did you approach depicting the violence of war a bit differently this time? Did you get a little more graphic, as opposed to suggestive, than you've done in the past?

Kubert: No, I did not approach it differently. I still feel that violence *implied* is a hell of a lot more effective. Allowing the reader's imagination to do most of the work is a hell of a lot more effective than an artist being ultra graphic in the medical sense—you know, showing bursting intestines, and stuff like that. It just doesn't make a lot of sense to me.



I feel that some of the most dramatic things I'd ever read were done by Hal Foster when he was doing *Tarzan* and *Prince Valiant*. He would never even show an arrow actually penetrating a person, but when he drew it, I could *feel* that arrow go in. And that's what I try to do with the stuff that I do. Perhaps what I'm doing is a little more violent than the kind of graphic violence that you see in comic books, because I'm allowing the reader to really, in his own mind, create that violent action, and details of that violent action. And I think they can do it a heck of a lot more effectively than I can draw it.

Plus, the fact that, in that way, the reader becomes part of that story. I'm automatically making the reader *push* himself into that story, and I think that's one of the most effective things that any cartoonist can do, if he can do it.

CBM: And it's particularly effective with war stories, too.

Kubert: Yeah. Also, the other approach on this—when you see it you'll recognize it—I thought that the story that Brian had written was so effective, that I wanted to make sure that it came across clearly to the reader. And because of that I decided on a simple three-tier designed page—that is, three tiers of panels per page and to use none of the fancy breakdowns. You know, "designed" pages where it becomes difficult to follow, or perhaps stops the reader's flow from panel to panel. I felt it was more important to have, except for the several full page illustrations we had built in, but, generally speaking, I wanted the reader to be able to have the information flow into him from panel to panel.

I think that what a cartoonist is trying to do, *should* be trying to do, is to have the still pictures that he's drawing seem to be moving for the reader. And the only way I think that that can be done is to have a smooth flow, a smooth transition from panel to panel On this particular job, I felt that designing the page with broken panels and a lot of inserts and things like that might prove to be more disruptive than I wanted it to be.

CBM: It sounds like that would also allow you to really serve Brian's script by building up a visual rhythm leading into those full pages, almost like Shakespeare's dialogue builds to the soliloquies.

Kubert: Exactly. That's exactly it. And Brian and his writing, to me, anyhow, just really demanded that kind of graphic storytelling.

CBM: You mentioned earlier that you and Bob had come up with a very clear conception of who Sgt. Rock was. Could you just generally lay out some of that outline for us?

Kubert: Well, basically Rock and the guys in Easy Company were just a bunch of guys who didn't glorify themselves in war, and didn't feel that they were war heroes at all. They were just people who happened to be in the Army because they were needed, and they were doing a dirty job because it was a job that had to be done. And it wasn't as if they took any great pleasure out of it. It was just war time, and war was not to be glorified. It's a situation where nobody is happy, and nobody wants to be there. But, being in it, you do the best you can, and you do it as straight as you can. And that's the way we saw Sgt. Rock and Easy Company.

In fact, after a while..., *Sgt. Rock* had been published for about thirty years, uninterrupted—one of the longest running comic books, I think, next to things like *Superman*. But, after a while, the damn character wrote itself! There's certain things he couldn't do, or wouldn't do. He walked in a certain way, he moved in a certain way, he looked in a certain way. After a while, he almost drew himself.

CBM: It's funny, because now that you mention it, he is an Everyman; but it's only in the war stories that he really seemed to shine or rise above that, for lack of better words, natural blending into the population that an Everyman has. Is that part of the character, too, or am I way off base here?

Kubert: Well, I think it is as you describe it. He *is* an Everyman, and there's a piece of Everyman in every one of the Easy Company guys, as well. And what Brian did, in this particular case, is that he *sharpened* those areas that really describe the characters of each one of the guys in Easy Company. And that made it really pleasurable to draw, pleasurable to do, pleasurable to plan out. The guy's just a damn good writer.

CBM: Does your respect for Brian's writing hint at the possibility of you two working together again in the future?

Kubert: [Laughter] We've talked about that, and I guess, perhaps, sometime in the future that's a good possibility. I'm already starting to work on my next project, which I won't even tell you what the subject matter is, but it's quite a departure from anything and everything that I've done so far, and I think that's going to take a while. It's one that I'm going to write myself.

CBM; You mentioned earlier that you also colored the Sgt. Rock graphic novel?

Kubert: Yes, I kind of insisted. It was one of the things that I wanted to do when we started this project is to be responsible for as much of it as I could be. I did the penciling, the inking. I was responsible for the lettering and the coloring. And a guy by the name of Peter Carlsson, who is in charge of Telegraphics here at the school, helped tremendously, because the coloring is actually a combination of blue line coloring and working on the computer, as well. In fact, Pete was also incredibly helpful with the *Yossel* book, because he was able to scan the pencils into the computer and get pretty much the effect that I was looking for. He's been a tremendous, *tremendous* help to me.

CBM: It sounds like you're still learning a new trick or two. [General laughter]

Kubert: Well, I'm not a computer guy. They're valuable tools. I'm still a hell of a lot more comfortable with a pencil and a brush.

How did The Hulk get in my back pocket?

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION AND AN OVERVIEW OF THE WORLD OF COMIC BOOK PAPERBACKS

by John Harrison

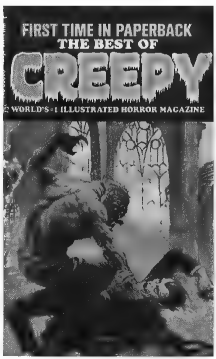
For too long the classic paperback format seems to have been underappreciated by serious comic book collectors. While trade paperbacks have attained a certain level of prestige—and rightly so—comic books in the traditional paperback size seem to be relegated by many to the scrap heap, treated just as paperbacks in general once were, as cheap throwaways, to be picked up at bus terminals as a way to pass the time on a particularly boring ride, only to be discarded or given away at journey's end, their pages dog-eared and spines creased, covers often sticky and marred by coffee cup rings or fast food stains.

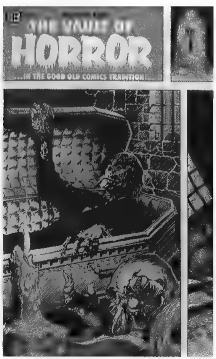
Of course, certain genres of vintage paperbacks have now well established themselves as legitimate collectibles and investments in their own right (particularly the crime, juvenile delinquency, drug and sleaze titles), with key books such as William Burroughs' *Junkie* (published by Ace in 1953 under the author pseudonym of William Lee) valued at over $180 in current guides[1] (and frequently bringing much more at auction when Very Fine copies are offered). So it would certainly seem that the time is right for comic book paperbacks to be reappraised.

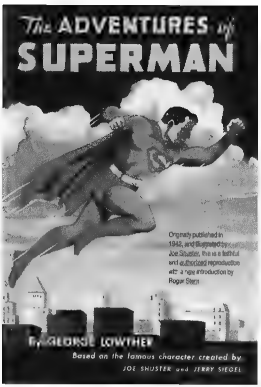
My own personal introduction to the world of paperback comic books came in the late 1970s, when I happened upon copies of the first two Pocket Books collections of *The Amazing Spider-Man* at a local newsagents. Reprinting in color the first thirteen issues of *The Amazing Spider-Man*, along with *Amazing Fantasy* #15, it was the first time I had ever been able to witness those incredible early adventures of Spidey, with that stunning Steve Ditko art, exciting, fast paced storylines, and a seemingly non-stop parade of classic villains and memorable supporting characters.

For a young kid like me, living in a land so far away from the USA (Australia) and in a time so seemingly far removed from when those stories were first published (fifteen years is an eternity when you're only fourteen), these paperback collections became my ticket to the past, and they spent so much time tucked into the back pocket of my jeans and rattling about in my school bag, and were read and reread so many times—by both myself and several of my friends—that they eventually seemed to fall apart in my hands.

But I didn't really care, the books had given me more than my money's worth, and today those two old decaying paperbacks still take their place of pride amongst my extensive collection of vintage paperbacks of *all* genres (horror, adult, film tie-in, counter culture, etc.) an irreplaceable link to that glorious time






The ADVENTURES of
SUPERMAN
Originally published in 1942, and illustrated by Joe Shuster, this is a faithful and authorized reproduction with a new introduction by Roger Stern
By GEORGE LOWTHER
Based on the famous character created by JOE SHUSTER and JERRY SIEGEL

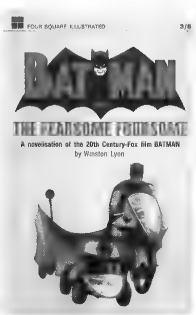
in your youth when you discover the wonder and magic in things which have preceded you.

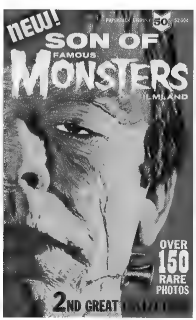
One of the earliest appearances of a comic book character in paperback form was the 1945 printing of George Lowther's novel *The Adventures of Superman*, published as part of the Armed Services Editions (a selection of small-sized paperbacks that were distributed to American servicemen in Europe and the Pacific during World War II). Originally published in hardcover by Random House in 1942, and featuring illustrations by Superman co-creator Joe Shuster, *The Adventures of Superman* was finally reprinted in 1995 by Applewood Books (Author George Lowther also worked as a scriptwriter for the Superman radio serial).

The emergence of the *MAD* paperbacks in 1955 (which coincided with the transition of the publication from comic to magazine format) made an important crossover in that they appealed widely to a demographic who didn't necessarily read *MAD* on a regular basis. The publishers also made the astute decision to produce paperback compilations devoted to one particular *MAD* artist (Don Martin, Dave Berg, Sergio Aragones, Al Jaffe, etc.), thereby attracting people whose primary interest in the magazine was the work of that specific person. With their seemingly endless array of reprints, foreign printings, cover art variations and publisher changes, the *MAD* paperback completist faces a truly nightmarish challenge.[2]

Comic book paperbacks began to make their presence really felt in the mid-1960s, thanks in no small part to the *Batman* television series (a pop culture phenomenon which—love or hate it—certainly helped elevate comic books and their characters to a previously unknown height of visibility and popularity). Amidst the plethora of Caped Crusader merchandise mass-produced to cash in on the show's popularity (including model kits, walkie-talkies, Halloween costumes and much more), Signet published a series of paperbacks featuring black and white reprints of vintage DC Batman adventures, along with several paperback novels based on the series (which featured great color photo covers that make them very popular with collectors). Signet also published a tie-in paperback for the 1966 *Batman* theatrical feature, which they renamed *Batman vs. The Fearsome Foursome*, and included a photo insert featuring a selection of stills from the movie. A number of Signet's Batman paperbacks were also published in the UK by Four Square, often with different cover designs.

While Signet was enjoying moderate success with its Batman paperbacks, Lancer decided to capitalize on the popularity of Marvel's brash breed of hip new heroes, publishing black and white reprints of their early landmark comics featuring Spider-Man, The Fantastic





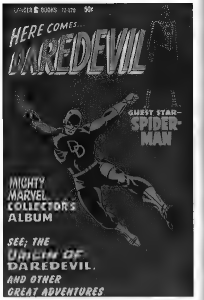
Four, The Incredible Hulk, Daredevil and more. The cover blurbs on the Lancer paperbacks really played up the humanistic element of the Marvel heroes (*"Greatest of that new, groovy breed of....SUPER HEROES WITH SUPER PROBLEMS"*), and highlighted their hipness quotient with excerpts of reviews from publications like *The Village Voice* (*"Spider-Man is the super-anti-hero of our time"*) and quotes (real or fabricated) from such prestigious establishments as Yale University (*"The boys here at Yale rate Marvel #1, and Stan Lee over any other writer on the contemporary scene"*).

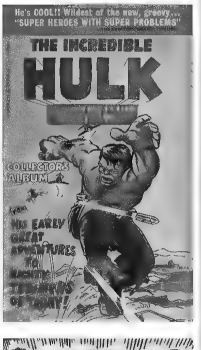
Spurred on by the popularity of Warren Publishing's *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine, all things creepy and crawly enjoyed a resurgence throughout the 1960s and early-1970s. Aside from Paperback Library's trio of volumes compiling some of the best photos and stories from *Famous Monsters*' earlier issues, Tempo Books also published a paperback reprint of some classic stories from Warren's horror comic magazine, *Creepy*, in 1971. Featuring a stunning piece of cover art by Frazetta (a cropped reprinting of his cover for *Creepy* #7), the Tempo paperback contained eight stories—seven from the pen of Archie Goodwin, and one story by Larry Ivie, all of them illustrated with great flair by the likes of Al Williamson ("Sand Doom"), Reed Crandall ("Vampires Fly at Dusk" and "Curse of the Full Moon"), Steve Ditko ("Collector's Edition"), Alex Toth ("Grave Undertaking"), Frank Frazetta ("Werewolf") and others. Goodwin also contributed a new introduction to the volume, in which he claims that "the last refuge of the artists as a storyteller is comics," and heaps glowing praise upon his illustrators (publisher James Warren also ads a brief paragraph following the introduction, crediting Goodwin, a one-time editor of the magazine, as the guiding light behind the success of *Creepy*).

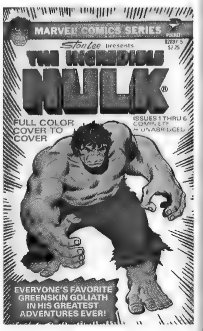
Although no paperback reprints of Warren's two other flagship horror comics, *Eerie* and *Vampirella*, appeared, Warner Books did publish six paperback novels featuring the Vampirella character in the mid-1970s. Authored by Ron Goulart, some of these novels were adapted from Archie Goodwin's *Vampirella* strips, and featured cover art by Enrich, Jose Gonzalez and Sanjulian (the first five covers were reprints of previous *Vampirella* covers, with Enrich's cover for the final novel, *Snakegod*, later being used as the cover for *Vampirella* #89). Three of the Vampirella paperback novels—*Bloodstalk*, *On Alien Wings* and *Dead Walk* were later published in the UK by Sphere Books, all featuring new covers by Gino D'Achille.

Also published during the height of mid-sixties monster mania were a series of Ballantine paperbacks reproducing classic EC horror and science-fiction stories from a decade earlier. The Ballantine volumes—*Tales From the Crypt*, *The Vault of Horror*, *Tales of the Incredible*, *Tomorrow Midnight* and *The Autumn People* (the latter two titles being compilations of EC stories authored by Ray Bradbury)—all featured beautiful Frazetta covers (with *Tales From the Crypt* being a particular standout). Although Ballantine's decision to drop the color robbed younger fans of the chance to experience the lurid gaudiness of the stories, the black and white art did highlight the beautiful line work employed by the artists, and the paperbacks would have certainly helped introduce EC to a whole new audience who were too young (or not even born) to appreciate them the first time around.

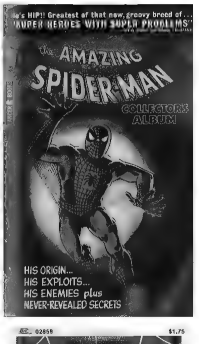
The late-1970s saw yet another Marvel foray into the comic paperback field, with Pocket Books publishing a selection of attractively packaged color anthologies which reproduced, in chronological order, early issues of *The Incredible Hulk*, *The Fantastic Four*, *Doctor Strange*, *Captain America*, *Spider-Woman* and *The Amazing Spider-Man* (the most successful of the Pocket Books line, with three volumes published which reprinted


HERE COMES DAREDEVIL
GUEST STAR-SPIDER-MAN
MIGHTY MARVEL COLLECTOR'S ALBUM
SEE: THE ORIGIN OF DAREDEVIL, AND OTHER GREAT ADVENTURES


He's COOL!! Wildest of the new, groovy... "SUPER HEROES WITH SUPER PROBLEMS"
THE INCREDIBLE HULK
COLLECTOR'S ALBUM
HIS EARLY GREAT ADVENTURES


MARVEL COMICS SERIES
Stan Lee presents
THE INCREDIBLE HULK
FULL COLOR COVER TO COVER
COLLECTOR'S ALBUM
EVERYONE'S FAVORITE GREENSKIN GOLIATH IN HIS GREATEST ADVENTURES EVER!

MARVEL COMICS SERIES
Stan Lee presents
The AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
THE WORLD'S GREATEST SUPERHERO BATTLING THE WORLD'S DEADLIEST SUPER FOES!
WHOK!



in total the first 20 issues of the title, along with *Amazing Fantasy* #15). The color and quality of the Pocket Books line is excellent (new plates were used for the printings) and in many ways they can be considered a forerunner of the prestigious Marvel Masterworks editions. The Pocket Books series also distinguished themselves from other comic book paperbacks by reproducing the stories page by page as originally printed, rather than adopting the popular method of cutting the panels up and enlarging them, usually featuring two to three panels per page (which certainly made them easier to read but also disrupted a lot of the flow of the original story).

Pocket Books also published during this period a paperback compendium of some of the Stan Lee/John Romita *Spider-Man* newspaper strip (in color), along with a series of twelve paperback novels featuring the adventures of Marvel super-heroes, known as the Marvel Novel Series, edited by Len Wein and Marv Wolfman, and highlighted by some very nice Bob Larkin cover paintings. Wein and Wolfman also wrote the first book in the series, the Spider-Man adventure *Mayhem in Manhattan*, with many of the subsequent books being authored by the likes of David Michelinie and Paul Kupperberg.

Cashing in on the popularity of *The Incredible Hulk* television series starring Bill Bixby and Lou Ferrigno, Signet published a "Video Novel" paperback, which consisted of over 150 still photos from the series pilot accompanied by dialogue balloons (this style of photo comic was certainly not new—Warren published magazine-sized adaptations of horror films like *The Mole People*, *Horror of Party Beach* and *The Curse of Frankenstein* in this format in the mid-1960s—but they certainly hit their peak during this period,[3] before being made virtually obsolete by the emerging home video revolution).

In terms of their collectibility and value, the majority of comic paperbacks are still relatively easy and inexpensive to acquire, with Very Good to Fine copies usually selling on eBay for between $5 and $7. Copies in Very Fine condition and higher turn up less frequently (particularly the Lancer titles) and command slightly better prices, but even these can still be picked up online for under $15 if the collector is lucky (certainly the online auction prices realized are much cheaper than what the majority of set sale dealers list them for in their catalogs). Of course, demand can dictate exceptions on certain pieces—a complete set of the six *Vampirella* paperback novels, listed as Near Mint-, recently sold on eBay for $91 (12 bids realized from an opening bid of $12).

It would be nice to think that sometime in the near future *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* will list comic related paperbacks in their own dedicated section (as it has recently started doing with promotional comics). After all, if the *Gude* recognizes Trade Paperbacks and Treasuries, why not the traditional paperback format?

Hopefully this brief introductory piece will help ignite some interest in the paperback comics genre amongst readers, and if the response warrants it would be great to see *Comic Book Marketplace* run further articles on the subject, as we have really only touched the tip of the iceberg here.

[1]The most recent recommended guide is Jeff Canja's *Collectable Paperback Books: A New Vintage Paperback Price Reference* (Second Edition), published by Glenmore Publishing in 2002.

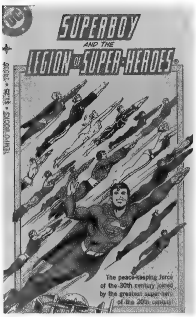
[2]For a detailed look at the *MAD* paperbacks, refer to Grant Geissman's excellent *Collectibly Mad*, published by Kitchen Sink Press in 1995.

[3]Other movies and television series' given the photo comic treatment in paperback form during this period include *Battlestar Galactica*, *Mork & Mindy*, *Star Trek*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

Comic Book Paperbacks:

A Selected Bibliography (1965-1982)

Note: Listings are alphabetical by publisher. All titles are US printings.


SUPERBOY
AND THE
LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES
The peace-keeping force of the 30th century joined by the greatest super-hero of the 20th century!

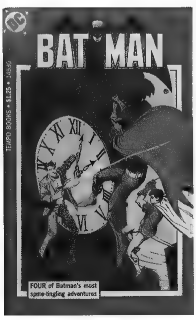
BALLANTINE BOOKS (B&W interior art):

The Autumn People (Oct 1965) U2108
(reprints the Ray Bradbury EC stories "There Was An Old Woman!," "The Screaming Woman!," "Touch and Go!," "The Small Assassin!," "The Handler," "The Lake!," "The Coffin!" and "Let's Play Poison!")

Tales From the Crypt
(Dec 1965) U2106
(reprints the EC stories "Let the Punishment Fit the Crime," "Dead Right!," "The High Cost of Dying!," "Reflection of Death!," "Poetic Justice!," "Whirlpool," "Blind Alleys" and "...And All Through the House...")

Tales of the Incredible
(Mar 1965) U2140
(reprints the EC science-fiction stories "Spawn of Mars," "Plucked!," "By George!," "50 Girls 50," "Judgment Day!," "Chewed Out!," "Child of Tomorrow!" and "The Precious Years")

Tomorrow Midnight
(Jun 1966) U2142
(reprints the Ray Bradbury EC stories "Punishment Without Crime," "I-Rocket," "King of the Grey Spaces!," "The One Who Waits," "The Long Years!," "There Will Come Soft Rains...," "Mars Is Heaven!" and "Outcast of the Stars")



The Vault of Horror
(Aug 1965) U2107
(reprints the EC stories "Star Light Star Bright!," "Last Respects!," "The Trophy!," "Curiosity Killed...," "The Basket!," "Fed Up!," "Wish You Were Here" and "The Craving Grave!")

Note: All of the Ballantine EC paperbacks feature Frank Frazetta cover art. *The Autumn People* and *Tomorrow Midnight* also contain introductions by Ray Bradbury, as well as a brief biography of the writer.

LANCER
(B&W interior art):

The Amazing Spider-Man
(1966) Lancer #72-111
(reprints *Amazing Spider-Man* #1 [1st story], 13, 16, *Annual* #1 [2nd feature])

The Fantastic Four
(1966) Lancer #72-111
(reprints *Fantastic Four* #1, 6, 11)

The Fantastic Four Return
(1967) Lancer #72-169
(reprints *Fantastic Four* #33, 35, *Annual* #2 story "The Final Victory of Dr. Doom")

Here Comes... Daredevil
(1967) Lancer #72-170
(reprints *Daredevil* #1, 16-17, 20-21)

Incredible Hulk
(1966)
(reprints *Incredible Hulk* #3, *Tales to Astonish* #?)

The Mighty Thor
(1966) Lancer #72-125
(reprints *Journey Into Mystery* #97 [both stories], 104, 114-115)

MARVEL ILLUSTRATED BOOKS
(B&W interior art unless otherwise noted):

Avengers: Origin of the Vision
(Jun 1982) ISBN 0-939766-9-4
(reprints *Avengers* #57-58, 83)

Captain America Battles Baron Blood
(May 1982) ISBN 0-939766-08-6
(reprints *Captain America* #250, 253-254)

Daredevil: Man Without Fear
(Nov 1982) ISBN 0-939766-18-3
(reprints *Daredevil* #6, 8)

Fantastic Four
(1982) ISBN 0-939766-??-?
(reprints *Fantastic Four* #55, 66-67)

Incredible Hulk
(Jan 1982) ISBN 0-9604146-9-X
(reprints *Avengers* #88, *Incredible Hulk* #140, 142)

Spider-Man: His Greatest Team-Up Battles
(Nov 1981) ISBN 0-9604146-7-3
(reprints *Amazing Spider-Man* #71, *Annual* #2, *Marvel Team-Up* #27 in color)

Spider-Man 2: Together With Thor, Havoc and the Man-Thing!
(Oct 1982) ISBN 0-939766-13-2
(reprints *Marvel Team-Up* #68-70)

The X-Men
(Mar 1982) ISBN 0-939766-01-9
(reprints *Giant-Size X-Men* #1, *X-Men* #117)

POCKET BOOKS (Color interior art):

The Amazing Spider-Man
(Sep 1977) ISBN 0-671-81443-5
(reprints *Amazing Fantasy* #15, *The Amazing Spider-Man* #1-6 with covers, includes special features looking at Spider-Man's costumes and powers)

The Amazing Spider-Man #2
(Feb 1978) ISBN 0-671-81444-3
(reprints *The Amazing Spider-Man* #7-13)

The Amazing Spider-Man #3
(Mar 1979) ISBN 0-671-82579-8
(reprints *The Amazing Spider-Man* #14-20, includes pin-up page by Steve Ditko)

Captain America
(May 1979) ISBN 0-671-82581-X
(reprints *Avengers* #4, *Tales of Suspense* #59-71)

Doctor Strange: Master of the Mystic Arts
(1978) ISBN 0-671-81447-8
(reprints *Strange Tales* #110-111, 114-129, includes pin-up page by Brunner)

Doctor Strange: Master of the Mystic Arts #2
(Jul 1979) ISBN 0-671-82582-8
(reprints *Strange Tales* #130-144, includes pin-up page by Brunner)

Fantastic Four
(Nov 1977) ISBN 0-671-81445-1
(reprints *Fantastic Four* #1-6 with covers, includes pin-up pages by Jack Kirby)

The Incredible Hulk
(Apr 1978) ISBN 0-671-82897-5
(reprints *The Incredible Hulk* #1-6 with covers, Hulk is re-colored green from the original grey in #1, includes two page pin-up spread by Trimpe)

The Incredible Hulk #2
(Jan 1979) ISBN 0-671-82559-3
(reprints *Tales to Astonish* #85-99, includes pin-up pages by Starlin and Abel)

Spider-Woman
(Sep 1979) ISBN 0-671-83026-0
(reprints *Marvel Spotlight* #32, *Spider-Woman* #1-8)

TEMPO BOOKS (B&W interior art):

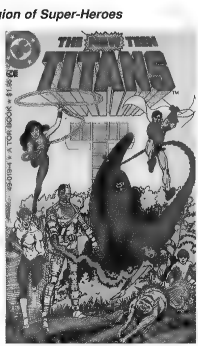
Batman
(1977) ISBN 0-448-14530-8
(reprints "Ghost of the Killer Skies," "Walk Batman—To Your Doom," "Half An Evil" and "The Riddle-Less Robberies of the Riddler")

Justice League of America
(1977) ISBN 0-448-14533-2
(reprints "Skyjack at 22,300 Miles!," "Takeover of the Earth-Masters!" and "Winner Takes the Earth!")

The Best of Creepy
(Feb 1971) ISBN 448-05368-075
(reprints "Sand Doom," "Overworked," "Untimely Tomb," "Vampires Fly at Dusk," "Werewolf," "Grave Undertaking," "Curse of the Full Moon" and "Collector's Edition," cover by Frank Frazetta, introduction by Archie Goodwin)

Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes
(1977) ISBN 0-448-14535-9
(reprints "Superboy's Darkest Secret!," "The Curse of the Blood Crystals," "The Six-Legged Legionnaire" and "The Legionnaires Who Never Were")

TOR BOOKS
(B&W interior art):
The New Teen Titans
(Oct 1982)
ISBN 0-523-49019-4
(reprints *The New Teen Titans* #1-4, cover by George Perez, introduction by Marv Wolfman)



Marketplace Mail

[continued from page 7]

Slab-happy

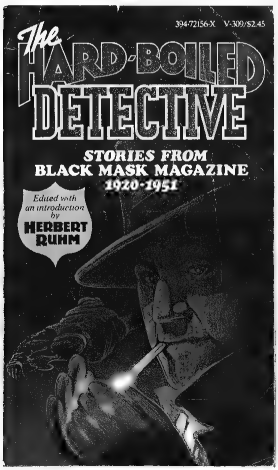
I read with interest Michael Naiman's comments in *CBM* #106 on how a certain slab-only dealer had developed a mark-up formula for his slabbed books. Mr. Naiman followed this up with what is becoming a routine reaction within the traditional collecting community: open wonderment at why anyone would pay multiples of *Guide* for a high-grade book just because it is slabbed.

I think it's worth pointing out that in most instances multiples of *Guide* are being paid for high-grade Golden Age books that are just not available in unslabbed condition. Any dealer today who is fortunate enough to possess copies of Golden Age books at 9.0 or over is going to get them slabbed, and then the market will dictate the price, not *Overstreet*, whose high-grade Golden Age prices are essentially useless.

While it's easy to paint big-spending slab collectors as pawns of a transitory market, it must be stated that the traditionalist's recommended course of action, which is to amble down to the local comics convention and buy high-grade books at *Guide* prices, is just no longer possible. Believe me, I've looked…there are plenty of good Golden Age deals out there, but not if you want VF or higher. You can toss your *Guide* back into your bag at that point, and just follow the money.

In a nutshell: the slab market *is* the comics market, at least with Golden Age high-grade books. There aren't any dealers left — on the Internet, on eBay, or at the conventions — who are going to sell you a 9.0 *Thrilling Comics* #67 in a Mylar sleeve for $388, just because the *Guide* says they should. They are going to slab it and sell it for at least $500, and probably more, since Schomburg is hot right now. That's the market, and in comics the market has the final word, not our beloved price guides.

Eric Martin
Mundelein IL



Flashgun and Shadow

I've been buying your publication since around #13 and have enjoyed it very much. Rarely is there an issue that there isn't something that interests me. (Side note: *any* information on *King of the Royal Mounted* in any of his formats would be appreciated.)

In *CBM* #105 Michelle Nolan asked for information on Flashgun Casey reprints. I have a paperback, *The Hard-Boiled Detective: Stories from* Black Mask Magazine *1920-1951*, published by Vintage Books (Jan 1977), which reprinted "Once Around the Clock" by Coxe from the May 1941 issue. Casey was also reprinted in *The Saint Detective Magazine* (Aug 1958) in "Reward for Survivors" (original title "Earned Reward" from the *Black Mask* March 1935 issue). The January 1959 *Saint Detective* contained "Guns in Action" (originally "Buried Evidence" from the *Black Mask* July 1935 issue) which featured Tom Wade who was from the same paper as Casey.

Now, the bad news. I think highly of Will Murray. He would not remember, but we met briefly at Pulpcon '77 when he was passing out the Addendum to his *Duende* magazine. But in his Shadow article there is one minor error — Kaluta's Carson of Venus was in *Korak, Son of Tarzan* not *Weird Worlds*. One major error — DC's Shadow comic came out summer of 1973, Steranko's *Pyramid* covers started in *1974*. I honestly believe Will made an honest mistake as that was a wonderful time of Shadow stuff coming out — Dover's reprint edition, for instance.

Richard E. Marvin
Fairborn OH

That's what I get for relying on my own memory of events and not double-checking.

Actually, Kaluta was simultaneously doing Carson of Venus for Korak *and Pellucidar in* Weird Worlds, *so I should have cited both. Correctly.*

I wonder, however, if given the lead time on paperbacks — typically a year — Steranko hadn't already started doing those Shadow paperback covers and cover proofs or preliminary art hadn't been appearing in his magazine, Mediascene, *at that time. I still think of those two Shadow incarnations as parallel, not sequential.*

Will Murray

Everything else

I saw by Steve Fears' letter that you passed on that information about Steve Canyon to him. Thank you. I'm glad that he enjoyed it as much as I did. You also did a nice article on it too.

I've read this magazine for a long time now. Once in a while I too will see articles that I don't really care for. But all in all this is one of the best mags out there. Plus it's about the love of my

End of DC's Silver Age
[continued from page 20]
Bomba the Jungle Boy *#7*
(Sep/Oct 1968)
Brother Power, the Geek *#2*
(Nov/Dec 1968)
Captain Action *#5*
(Jun/Jul 1969)

Marketplace Mail
[continued from facing page]
life—comics! I will always buy this magazine because it is about comics—all sides of the hobby.

I've been a collector now since 1958. In third grade, I knew I wanted every comic book in the world. Over the years I have seen a lot of changes in the comics industry, but I've collected comics, newspaper strips, magazines, records, anything that was about comics. Comic books have always been my #1, but everything else in comics too.

Anyhow! I just wanted to thank you for continuing *CBM*. I really enjoy the magazine it's one of the best out there.

Rod Matlock
Pueblo CO

While we are basking in the glow of all these letters of praise, it seems like a good time to mention that we have been talking about making some drastic changes in direction here in CBM. *We would like to increase the number of color pages in each issue from 16 pages to 48 (or even more!), so that in addition to doing feature articles about the comics, we could do some serious reprinting of comics from the past that are simply unavailable on the market now. And I, for one, am in favor of a name change for the magazine, to simply* The Comics! *This new magazine would be less about the "marketplace" and more about the comics as a 19th and 20th Century art form and an important part of the popular culture of the past 150 years. Readers, please weigh in on this important decision! If this magazine changes as outlined above, what types of things would you like to see more of? Or less of? Feedback, please!!*

RC

The Hawk and the Dove *#6*
(Jun/Jul 1969)
The Inferior Five *#10*
(Sep/Oct 1968)
Secret Six *#7 (Apr/May 1969)*
Spectre *#10 (May/Jun 1969)*

There's also one adventure title that I quite frankly couldn't decide what to do with: *Hot Wheels* (1970-71), which was a TV adaptation based on a toy, meaning it shared traits common to both *Bomba* and *Captain Action*, part of the late '60s "last gasp," although *Hot Wheels* came out a couple of years too late to be included with that bunch. For the sake of completeness, if we accept *Hot Wheels* as a Silver Age title, its final issue was #6 (Jan/Feb 1971).

I've also omitted two reprint titles from consideration here—*DC Special* and *From Beyond the Unknown*—for the same reason I cut off *Strange Adventures* at the point when that title went all-reprint: One of the surest indications that a comic book age has come and gone is when it begins to be recycled on a regular basis.

Finally, there are a handful of titles that were launched during the waning days of the Silver Age but are more properly a part of the Weird Age—as noted above, the interregnum period between the end of the Silver Age and the beginning of the Bronze Age (in 1975). This includes a western, *All Star Western*, which would shortly become *Weird Western Tales*, and four mystery/horror titles: *House of Secrets*, *Phantom Stranger*, *The Unexpected* and *The Witching Hour*.

[Author's acknowledgment: A large debt of gratitude is due to Craig Shutt, *CBG*'s "Mr. Silver Age" himself. This article would be much the poorer without Craig's input and assistance, which went over and above the call of duty.]

Dave Blanchard is a writer/editor living in Twinsburg, Ohio, with his wife and two daughters.

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

BACK ISSUE DEPARTMENT

These issues are available...

#52	Archie, All-Star, Schwartz Part III, Fox	$8
#58	Lost in Space, Weisinger, Basil Wolverton!	$10
#65	Pre-Code Crime, Bob Kane	$8
#66	Women of the Spirit, Batman & Raven!	$8
#72	Iron Man & Subby, Larry Lieber Part I	$8
#73	Warren Horror, Larry Lieber Part II	$8
#76	Rocky & Bullwinkle, Poe, Wolverton	$8
#83	Magnus, Saturn Girl, Plastic Man	$8
#84	Morrow, Ditko, Romita Sr., Braniac	$8
#85	Eisner, Manning, Whitman Mystery Part I	$8
#86	Perez Part I, Bronze Age, Whitman Mystery Part II	$8
#87	George Evans, Detectives Inc.	$8
#88	Murphy Anderson, Rudolph	$8
#89	Hal Foster, Frank Cho, George Perez Part II	$8
#90	Patriotic issue, Bob Lubbers, George Perez Part III	$8
#91	Johnny Craig, Harry "A" Chesler	$8
#92	Joe Kubert, Eddie Stanky, Mary Worth	$8
#93	Alex Raymond, Flash Gordon, Gail Simone	$8
#94	GA Green Lantern, Spectre, Perez Wrap-up	$8
#95	Disney strip art, Miracleman	$8
#96	Milton Caniff, Marc Hempel	$8
Sp #5	Spider-Man, Gerber Sticker Set #8	$10
#97	Curt Swan, T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents	$8
#98	Western: Dick Ayers, Graham Ingels, John Severin	$8
#99	Marvel 1965, Iron Man, Hulk, Transformers	$8
#100	Charles Schulz, H. J. Ward, Pulp Roots of Batman	$8
#101	Archie, Butch Guice, CrossGen	$8
#102	Lev Gleason, Russ Heath, Commercial Comics Co.	$8
#103	Disney Comics, Jack Bradbury, Don Rosa	$8
#104	Batman, Neal Adams, Loeb & Lee, Lew Schwartz	$9
#105	Wrightson, Kaluta, Jeffrey Jones, Bruce Jones	$9
#106	Good Girl Art, Rima, Cat Girl, John Celardo	$9
#107	Victor Fox, Aquaman's Paul Norris	$9

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CBM BACK ISSUES
GEMSTONE PUBLISHING
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WEST PLAINS, MO 65775-0469

by Mike Wilbur

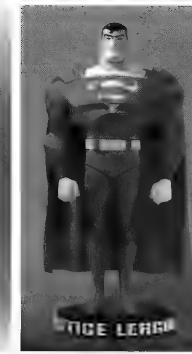
DC Gets Animated

Prior to 1985's **Crisis on Infinite Earths**, **DC Comics** was the birthplace of the comic book Multiverse and the home of the most extensive network of parallel worlds ever committed to paper. Earth 1, Earth 2, Earth 3, Earth Prime, Earth X (no relation to Alex Ross' trilogy of limited series for Marvel Comics), Earth S, and many more alternate Earths populated the pages of DC Comics until the cataclysmic events of **Crisis** merged them all into one allegedly less-confusing and more cohesive universe.

But one alternate universe escaped the brutal purge. In a world we might call **Earth A**, the various animated incarnations of DC's pantheon of characters still live, forever protected from oblivion by the powerful gods of licensing. From the **Fleischer Studio** ***Superman*** cartoons of the '40s through the ***Super-Friends*** in the '70s, to the current ***Justice League***, the animated DC universe lives on in TV syndication, home video and toys, untouched by decades of cataclysm-du-jour in the comic book pages.

With the closing of the chain of **Warner Brothers Studio Stores**, marketing of DC's animated icons has fallen to the wizards of **DC Direct**.

Their first foray into the 3-dimensional translation of animated characters came with the 2000 release of the **Harley Quinn** medium statue. Based on a character who, at that time, *only* existed in the realm of Warner Brothers' syndicated ***Batman:***



The Animated Series during its run in the early to-mid '90s, Harley was a smash hit (and was released again in 2002 as a smaller-scale mini-statue).

Following the success of this first release, DC Direct followed up with same-scale statues of the other costumed women of the animated DC universe of the '90s.

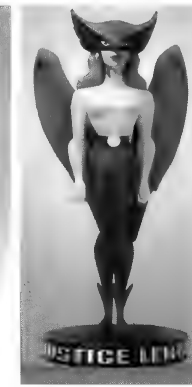
Next up, in spring of 2001, was **Batgirl**, perched enticingly atop the **Bat-Signal** searchlight. Batgirl was followed, in fall 2001, by bat foe (and sometimes-partner of Harley Quinn) **Poison Ivy**, reclining seductively on a bed of roses.

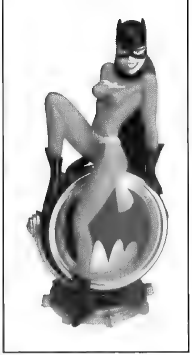
The next spring saw the appearance of **Catwoman**, relaxing confidently upon a freshly cracked safe with her feline cohort. And fall 2002 found **Supergirl**, Metropolis' Maid of Steel (and cousin of Superman) soaring over the Daily Planet building.

Meanwhile, other sub-series of animated character pieces were in the works.

Through 2002 and 2003, a bi-monthly series of eight **JLAnimated** maquettes were released, featuring the seven core members of the currently-running **Cartoon Network** series *Justice League*, plus late addition **Aquaman**, who had proved to be a fan favorite during a multi-part guest appearance on the show.

In order of release, the JLAnimated series presented 3D renditions of **Wonder Woman**, **Martian Manhunter**,





Superman, **Green Lantern**, **Hawkgirl**, **Flash**, **Batman** and **Aquaman**. After this series of releases finished, they were followed by smaller-scale mini-statue versions. Also in 2003, DC Direct began a series of "wall plaques," following the same character release sequence.

Beginning in 2003, a series of maquettes based on the '70s **Super-Friends** versions of the JLA heroes hit the market. Releases through the year featured (in order) **Batman**, **Robin**, **Aquaman**, **Wonder Woman** and **Superman**.

Early 2004 welcomes the debut of the **Classic Animation Maquette Series**, highlighting characters from various eras of animated DC series, starting with (in order) **Superman** (Fleischer Studios version), **Nightwing** ('90s version), **Harley Quinn** ('90s version) and **Green Lantern** ('90s version).

Spring 2004 will see the beginning of a line of maquettes based on characters from Cartoon Network's anime-influenced ***Teen Titans***, beginning with **Starfire** and **Robin**.

If you're a fan of DC animation from *any* era, DC Direct has got just the statues for you. And if you *can't* find something you like, well, maybe you're just not as big a DC animation fan as you thought you were!

by Michael Naiman

Five-Grade Gurus

With the adjustment of *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* now showing five different grades, the encapsulated comic marketplace has responded accordingly by sales results that are worth noting. As one would expect, many or all 9.4 graded books sell for well over the 9.4 *Guide* pricing. Books in grade 9.2 sell for close to Overstreet 9.4 at least later-day Silver Age circa 1967-1970, but earlier books, in particular 1960-1965, sell for above 9.4 *Guide* value.

Recent examples include *Fantastic Four* #29 9.2 $460 (2.62X NM) *Guide* 9.4 = $175; *Tales of Suspense* #41 9.2 $1,825 (1.87X NM) *Guide* 9.4 = $975; *Amazing Spider-Man* #23 9.2 $985 (1.64X NM) *Guide* 9.4 = $600. Even relatively easy to find issues are fetching extremely high returns: *Daredevil* #10 9.2 $399 (2.1X NM) *Guide* 9.4 = $190, #12 9.2 $415 (4.37X NM) *Guide* 9.4 = $95, *Strange Tales* #135 9.2 $555 (3.46X NM) *Guide* 9.4 = $160.

The market for 9.4 grades continues to astonish with even lesser titles or issues: *Captain America* #117 9.4 $322 (4.29X NM) *Guide* = $75; *Warlock* #1 9.4 $200 (4X NM) *Guide* = $50; *Spectacular Spider Man* #1 9.4 $345 (6.9X NM) *Guide* = $50; *Marvel Spotlight* #5 9.4 $900 (5.14X NM) *Guide* = $175. And, of course, not all items have to be in high grade. How about a recently sold *Millie the Model* #1 FN $400 (1.66X FN) *Guide* = $240.

For the collector who doesn't care for slabbed books: *Showcase* #37 9.2 NM- sold for the NM price of $925 and an issue of *Forever People* #1 9.2 (NM-) sold for the NM price of $75.

From the All Star Auction this fall: *Vault of Horror* #17 9.2 NM- Gaines File Copy $1,657; *Tales from the Crypt* #35 9.6 NM+ Northford $1,624; *MAD* #23 9.2 NM- Gaines File Copy $1,181; *Uncle Donald & His Nephews* 9.8 (Dell Giant #38) $985. A Winsor McCay from December 1906 sold for $42,110.

Original comic art continues to scorch the landscape with prices that are reaching new levels on a weekly basis. There are some art collectors who are becoming disgruntled, disturbed and discontented over the practices of some art dealers. But, unfortunately, the collector is subject to The Golden Rule: He who has the Gold—Rules!

Recent original art sales include: John Buscema *Thor* #191 Cover $8,500; "Genesis" 6-pg. story by Reed Crandall from *Weird Science-Fantasy* #29 $7,000; Frank Miller's *Dark Knight Batman* #4 page 35 $5,000 (signed by both Frank Miller and and Klaus Janson—showing Batman and Robin, Alfred, the Batman origin, the Batcave and the Power Gloves); John Stanley original artwork for a special Little Lulu commissioned painting, circa late 1980s, $4,650 (gouache and watercolor on illustration board, signed by the artist on the lower right hand corner; one of the first paintings Stanley was commissioned to do. It is estimated that he did less than ten of these.); Todd McFarlane art from *Amazing Spider-Man* #323 page 8 $3,550; Dr. Seuss 1st edition copy of *If I Ran the Circus* signed with an original drawing of Horton the Elephant $2,000 (Note: Cat in the Hat 1st editions with dust jackets regularly bring between $3,500-$5,000. Can you imagine what would happen should original pages of *CITH* ever come to market? I have a feeling that Spielberg, Lucas and Burton et. al. would be elbowing all others out of the way to get their hands on this!); Calvin and Hobbes original ink sketch signed by Bill Waterson measuring approximately 5x6 inches $2,275; Gil Kane cover to *Creatures on the Loose* #19 $1,825; Frank Frazetta prelim Death Dealer for *Shock*, pencil and ink drawing measures 9"x12" $1,800.

A couple of months after the holiday season has come and gone, the toy marketplace continues to churn away. The average retail outlet has their action figures shelved for three months (90 days), after that the items (because of market depreciation) are actually worth less than their original point of purchase price. Because of the fickle nature of collectors, they lose interest in the old product and are more inclined to go after the latest item that is coming to market.

Toys are meant to be played with, their collectibility is doubtful, and they are *not* marketed as collectibles. Retail outlets only have a limited shelf space, and the unsold items (in some instances) are returned to the manufacturer. Or, in most cases, are released at a fraction of their retail value, to minimize storage overhead costs.

No comprehensive price guide exists to attach true market values to the recent action figure toy market. Several topical price guides (such as *Wizard Magazine*) measure market changes in the most popular of recent (10 years or less) action figures on the market. Commonly, those prices are highlighted in pink to demonstrate the devaluation of listed figures. Regrettably, the action figure market sinks in value as time progresses and more items appear in on-line auctions, saturating the buying experience with cheap toys.

A prime example of this phenomenon is surely the consistent marketing of *Simpsons* items. In the early days (1990) *[continued on page 76]*

CBM Market Watch

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman

Andy Panda
#46 VF/NM $15 79%
#48 VF/NM $15 79%
#49 VF/NM $15 79%
#50 VF/NM $15 79%

Archie Annual
#9 VG $17 63%

"Archie's Girls, Betty and Veronica"
#34 VF- $25 31%

Avengers
#26 VG $15 1.25X
#53 VF $19 51%
#78 FN- $17 1.89X
#80 NM $18 47%

Bamm Bamm & Pebbles
#1 VF/NM (file) $54 57%

Black Panther
#1 NM $29 1.16X

Blue Beetle
#49 VG $102 53%

Captain Atom (Nationwide)
#3 VF $375 2.95X

Donald Duck
#51 VF/NM $47 79%
#52 VF/NM $122 88%
#53 VF $20 54%
#54 VF+ $62 50%
#55 FN $18 1.23X

Fantastic Four
#7 VG $125 81%
#8 VG- $110 71%
#9 VG- $125 81%
#10 GD+ $110 1.43X
#45 VG+ $35 1.59X

Felix the Cat
#100 NM- $76 1.27X

House of Secrets
#134 NM+ $10 75%
#135 NM $15 1.07X

Howard the Duck (1976)
#1 NM $12 57%

Human Fly (1977)
#1 NM- $4 56%

Ibis
#2 FN $148 51%

Incredible Hulk
#102 GD $18 78%
#102 VF- $75 45%

Kamandi
#29 NM/MT $15 94%
#31 NM $6 50%
#33 NM $5 46%

Kid Colt Outlaw
#183 NM+ $4 38%
#186 NM+ $4 38%
#187 NM- $4 38%
#188 NM $4 35%
#189 NM $4 38%
#190 NM+ $8 71%

Lois Lane
#14 GD $10 58%
#15 GD $12 70%
#106 VF $30 1.03X

Lone Ranger
#75 VF- $30 66%

Looney Tunes
#27 NM $243 75%
#37 FN $41 65%
#38 GD $19 92%
#41 GD $10 66%

Rip Hunter
#1 GD $22 44%

Rocky and his Fiendish Friends
#1 NM- $250 86%

Sad Sack
#8 VG $103 5.72X

Sea Devils
#1 VG+ $89 89%

Sensation
#61 VG- $74 93%
#66 VG $67 84%

Seven Seas
#3 VF $330 83%

Sgt. Fury
#1 FN $114 31%
#6 FN $32 82%

Shadow (Archie)
#4 FN+ $9 75%
#1 VF $50 94%

Showcase
#29 VG- $65 89%
#57 GD $21 Guide

Silver Surfer
#4 FN $120 Guide

Star Spangled
#1 VG $800 77%

Star Trek (Gold Key)
#1 VG $100 1.28X

Strange Adventures
#235 VF- $39 3.25X
#244 VF/NM $15 1.36X

Strange Tales
#110 VG $114 50%
#152 FN $9 60%
#153 FN $10 70%
#154 FN $12 83%
#155 VF $20 60%
#156 VF $20 59%
#164 VF $15 50%
#165 NM $20 40%

Sub-Mariner (2nd series)
#2 VF+ $36 65%

Superboy
#83 VF $86 1.3X
#85 VF+ $38 58%

Supercar
#3 VF $75 89%

Supergirl
#1 VF/NM $20 50%

Superman
#11 GD $207 96%
#28 FN $275 76%
#131 FN $41 57%
#132 FN $42 58%
#133 FN $47 65%
#135 FN $54 75%
#137 FN $82 1.14X
#140 VF- $101 71%
#199 VF+ $150 84%
#252 VF $50 85%

Superman Family
#222 NM $15 2.5X%

Suspense
#9 GD $21 70%

Tales Calculated To Drive You Bats
#1 FN $20 56%

Tales of Suspense
#50 VG $40 1.17X
#59 VG $34 58%
#90 NM $39 65%
#40 GD $95 87%

Tales To Astonish
#1 VG+ $230 86%

Uncle Scrooge
#1 (FC386) GD $115 1 2X
#2 (FC456) VG $109 91%
#4 GD $45 1.36X
#5 NM $257 70%
#10 VF $175 1.5X
#50 VF/NM $66 76%

Unknown Worlds
#28 FN $42 2.8X

Vault of Horror
#14 GD $84 Guide
#15 VG+ $75 52%

War Fury
#2 GD $10 83%

WDCS
#67 VG $40 91%
#79 VG+ $14 43%
#81 VG $32 1.14X
#93 FN+ $51 1.42X
#95 GD $8 66%
#106 VG $10 42%

Weird Fantasy
#15 VG- $46 40%

Weird Science
#20 FN $57 57%

Wings
#69 VG $35 83%
#92 VG $62 1.55X
#95 VF- $133 1.15X
#96 FN $112 1.87X
#105 FN $68 1.33X

Wonder Woman
#28 GD- $70 82%
#78 VG $51 85%
#87 VG $68 1.13X
#88 VG $42 70%
#94 VG $64 1.33X

Jamie Newbold
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We've been busy meeting the demands of customers curious to see what our shop looks like. We provide 2,000 square feet of new and used comic books—and very little traditional comic book store merchandise. We own all of the product displayed in the store. We acknowledged long ago the risk of backing up a large amount of cash in back issues, knowing that money may be tied up for years. We faced the risk of trying to make a living without selling gaming merchandise, trading cards, clothing and toys. We held fast to the notion that the core of our business would be comic books. And, if possible, only comic books.

We knew then and know now that selling just comics is a niche market that can be labeled risky at best. With that in mind we accepted the risks and stuck to our guns. We built up the store and set our financial limits to maintain a growing amount of comics in our inventory at all times.

Gold and Silver Age comics are often big money books and can kill a business unable to turn them over regularly. A commitment to acquisition and aggressive business has allowed Gino and me to meet goals we set years ago. We searched out Gold and Silver Age collections based upon what we could afford to own. Starting small, we have purchased and sold as business permitted. Slowly, we've built up our cash flow and back issues to a point where we have filled up two warehouse suites with comics.

Now, on the eve of our six year anniversary we've learned many lessons about running a comic book store that just sells comic books. Made even tougher by the on-line competition that doesn't share our overhead costs. It is a source of pride that people seek out our store to view and hold the comics they wish to own. Some of those customers are *CBM* readers. We thank you.

Golden Age: *Adventures Into the Unknown* #32 FN $49; *Big Shot* #58 VG $30; *Donald Duck* #26 GD $25; *Jungle Comics* #102 FN+ $59, #108 FN $51, #109 VG/F $48, #124 FN $46; *Piracy* #1 VG/F $60, #2 FN $48, #3 VF $90, #4 FN $36; *Planet Comics* #65 G/VG $65; *Startling Comics* #28 VG- $78, #29 VG+ $65, #44 GD $49; *Superman* #29 VG+ $240, #38 FN+ $377.

Silver Age: *Amazing Spider-Man* #11 FN+ $225, #14 FN $550, #36 FN $60, #38 FN $60, #51 FN $54, #53 F/VF $50, #60 FN+ $44, #64 VF $59; *Captain America* #101 FN+ $29; *Fantastic Four* #4 VG/F $600 signed by Lee/Kirby, #17 FN $102, #26 VG/F $113, #93 VF $23; *Hulk* #3 FA/GD $100, #4 G/VG $175, #5 VG $226; *Justice League of America* #80 VF $20, #94 VF $58; *Wallace Wood Treasury 1980* VF $25; *Witzend* #6 VF $50; *X-Men* #52 FN+ $25.

Bronze Age: *Amazing Spider-Man* #135 F/VF $35; *FOOM* #11 NM $17; *Incredible Hulk* #182 FN $24; *Marvel Previews Presents* (Punisher) #2 VF $70; *Marvel Super Action Magazine* (Punisher) #1 NM $55; *Marvel Team-Up* #5 NM $20, #8 NM- $20, #9 NM- $18; *Uncanny X-Men* #141 VF+ $30, #142 VF $20; *Vampirella* #71 NM $30.

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Hail and well met, Friends! It's been a surprisingly busy season for buying and selling. The big show season of the summer is past, and was very active and successful, but now the fall is even more active overall. It seems we all grow accustomed to getting more focused in general when the summer's over, and school begins again.

Anyways, as usual, high-grade Marvels lead the pack in terms of constant and reliable demand. As time passes, buyers become aware that books that used to be perceived as relatively easy to find have gotten tough. Books up through the early to mid-'70s are very popular in high grades. People are starting to notice the next horizon, which is 25¢ cover price issues.

As soon as word gets around about a new comic themed movie project from Hollywood—BADABOOM!—

#99 VG	$90	1.88X	#109 FN+	$26	58%	#8 VF	$225	94%	#13 VF	$105	50%	**Young Allies**		
#101 VG	$48	1.14X	#110 FN-	$18	40%	#8 VF-	$128	53%	#13 VF	$58	40%	#18 FN	$218	76%
#102 VG	$62	1.48X				#9 FN	$75	78%	#13 VF	$204	91%			
			X-Men			#10 VF	$168	66%	#18 FN+	$90	1.87X	**Zip Jet**		
World's Finest			#3 FN	$90	52%	#10 VF	$163	65%	#23 VF-	$37	31%	#1 FN	$200	90%
#104 FN	$25	56%	#4 FN	$202	1.22X	#11 VF	$125	60%	#26 VF	$25	28%			
#107 FN	$22	49%	#6 VF	$182	76%	#12 VF	$122	46%	#28 VF+	$95	81%			
#108 VG	$16	53%	#7 VF-	$96	41%	#12 VF	$91	36%						

everybody wants a copy of first or key appearances of the characters who are rumored to be featured in the movie.

Not that there's anything wrong with that.

For example, *Spidey* #129 with the first appearance of the Punisher is off the charts right now in demand, and the price is squirting upwards. Of course, it helps that it's been an egregiously under-priced book compared to the other major early '70s keys for some time now, so it's really just going through an adjustment. Others to watch presently are *X-Men* #100 and #101, with first Pheonix, *Marvel Spotlight* #5 with first Ghost Rider, *Batman* #189 with first SA Scarecrow and *Bat* #232 with first Ras A! Gul.

Also have noticed that the demand for 30¢ and 35¢ variant cover price issues has increased dramatically. We see some of the 30¢ers, but almost never the 35¢ers.

DCs have been experiencing a resurgence in nice grades. It's about time! Especially considering that they're much scarcer than the Marvels. They deserve respect. As much as most of us love the Marvels, DCs have great imagination and charm. Many of their artists are criminally underrated too—such as Infantino, Anderson, Greene, Giella, Kane, Swan and others. Any book that was produced under the editorship of the great Julie Schwartz is a fun (and probably educational) read. And Mort Weisinger's stuff is very imaginative too!

Golden Age is the same as ever. There are very desirable books that are going to sell quickly when we're lucky enough to get them, and the other books—good, bad, or ugly—are going to sell at their own pace. ECs have picked up a bit of steam. No matter how often they're reprinted, there's nothing like having a collection or sample of the originals. They have a unique look and feel!

Timelys, especially the well known ones, are selling at the usual brisk clip, even though they're generally pricey. There are tons of sleepers in Timely too, such as *Annie Oakley*, *Casey Crime Photographer*, *Blackstone the Master Magician* and various others that people don't even realize are Timelys 'til they see them.

DCs are steady, especially the "big logo" issues. Other publishers are hit and miss, depending on certain collectors interests at a given time. There's much more, but we'll get into that next time. Till then, may the Rings of Raggador never stain your shirt.

Some recent **sales**: *Action* #57 VG+ $245; *All-Star* #18 G/VG $215; *Batman* #189 NM- $215, #232 NM $225; *Capt America* #8 VF $3500; *Crime SuspenStories* #22 G/VG $90; *Green Lantern* #76 VF/NM $325; *Journey Into Mystery* #112 NM- $595; *Savage Tales* #1 VF+ $120; *Spidey* #19 VF/NM $415, #129 NM- $475.

Well, there you go. We've been so busy, can't take the time that I'd like to really get in depth. Someday! Can't believe you guys are at #108!! Unbelievable. I remember when I got my complimentary copy of #2. Congratulations!

Nick Beckett & John Skoulides

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Well, the summer came and went without its usual lull. Unlike our American cousins, who schedule their biggest comic-related event for the middle of the year, us Brits tend to dust off the sun cream, change the contents of the piggy-bank into pesetas, and head off to parts foreign in order to get leary on somebody else's doorstep.

This summer, though, all things Falaraki seem to have been sacrificed and four-color business has been remarkably brisk. Economic conditions elsewhere in the world also appear to have bypassed this fair isle and the slowdown in sales that I've been hearing about in the U.S. has not landed on these shores. In fact, this summer has been the busiest for a number of years.

Even more encouraging is the fact that sales have not been film driven. With the exception of *Spideys* featuring the Punisher (and we all know the film is going to be utter pants, don't we?), books are selling on the basis of people actually collecting them, not simply speculating. Marvel still rules the roost, and high-grade Bronze Age is seeing high levels of action. These early to mid '70s books are getting harder and harder to find (try putting together a run of *FF* between #116 and #130 in VF/NM or above) and command prices above *Guide* in top condition. CGC sales are also slowly creeping up in terms of percentage of total sales, but we are still not seeing the demand of the Stateside market. This despite the fact that we charge only a small premium for CGC books in the 8.0 to 9.0 range over raw books.

DC remains steady, if unspectacular. Batman is the main man, as he always has been, and *Justice League*, Adams' *Green Lanterns* and *Brave and the Bolds* sell through if priced right. Superman and Flash become old friends as they sit in the boxes, attracting the attention of nobody in particular. However, some of the more esoteric titles have a fan following (*Sinister House of Secret Love*, anyone?) and *Guide* goes out of the window if anything like this turns up in real nice shape.

Coming into the fall and winter months, it has to be said that the business is enjoying rude health. Whilst speculator frenzy surrounding silly number CGCs and film-associated books makes for a few good paydays, it is not an indication of how the market is truly faring. When the money men have departed the hobby, having been stung on the case-loads of *DDs* they hoarded, or the set of *Wolverine: Origin* in CGC 9.8 that is now not worth the plastic it's encased in, the rest of us are left to pick up the pieces. Fortunately, it looks like

the true comic book fan is still hanging in there, buying and selling and generally getting a kick out of acquiring the comics they love. And long may that be the case!

And finally, the **scores** on the doors: *Amazing Spider Man* #31 VF+ (CGC) $260; *Fantastic Four* #35 VF+ (CGC) $110; *Green Lantern* #77 VF+ $70; *House Of Mystery* #252 NM $35; *Justice League of America* #59 VF+ $55; *Special Marvel Edition* #15 NM (CGC) $250.

Robert Letscher II

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Greetings from the Phoenix valley, where it hits 102 degrees in late October.

With comic graphic-novels on the *NY Times* Bestseller list, and TV shows like *Smallville* and *Tarzan* running in primetime, many super-hero-themed video games, and numerous additional comics-based movies in the works, it seems the medium is finally gaining a hint of the long-overdue respect it's had coming! If only we can get a small fraction of the potential future collectors to come over to the comic-collecting hobby. I've never seen more shirts, hats, stickers, backpacks and the like around town, covered with colorful images of Spiderman, Hulk, X-Men, etc. And they seem to be popular with children and adults alike. It is a fun time to be a fan!

Interest in comics is as diverse as ever, with books of all eras seeing sales. Here are a few samples of some of the unslabbed comics we've **sold** lately: *Amazing Spider-Man* #300 VF $43; *Avengers* #57 NM- $128; *Baffling Mysteries* #16 VG+ $40; *Jackpot* #1 VG+ $600; *Lawbreakers Suspense* #11 FN- $400; *Silver Surfer* #1 VG- $52; *Space Adventures* #60 (1967) NM $90; *Spectre* #4 VF/NM (Signed: Adams) $85; *Terrors of the Jungle* #10 VG/FN $72; *This Magazine is Haunted* #13 GD- $50; *Werewolf By Night* #1 VG $25; *Whiz* #57 VG $90.

Not surprisingly, the CGC-graded comics continue to be popular: *All-Select* #10 CGC 8.0 $1350; *Heroic Comics* #88 CGC 9.2 Circle-8 $91; *Lady Death in Lingerie* #1 Micro-Premium Leather CGC 9.9 $94; *Magnus* #1 CGC 9.4 $30; *Men and Micronauts* #1 CGC 9.8 $40; *Rai* #1 CGC 9.8 $204; *Shadowman* #1 CGC 9.8 $50; *Sojourn* #1 CGC 9.8 $68; *Solar* #1 (Valiant) CGC 9.8 $305; *Teen Titans* #1 CGC 9.2 Circle-8 $740; *The Beatles* #1 (Dell Giant) CGC 7.5 $408; *Unity* #1 CGC 9.8 $71; *X-Men* #191 CGC 9.8 $39.

There has been another increase in demand for comic book art. Here are a few pages of **original line art** we've sold recently: *Adventure Comics* #408 Hand-colored Cover $150; *Atom* #38 Approval Cover $135; *Capt. Victory* #14 (Kirby) $200; **Jack Adler Collection** has been especially hot: *Detective* #441 Hand-colored Cover $200; *Forbidden Tales of Dark Mansion* #11 Approval Cover $130; *From Beyond the Unknown* #13 Hand-colored Cover and matching Approval Cover $365; *Ghosts* #4 Approval Cover $110, #8 Approval Cover $120; *Hawk & Dove* #1 Approval Cover $300; *House of Mystery* #179 Approval Cover $175, #183 Approval Cover (Signed: Adams) $175, #195 Approval Cover $180, #210 Uncut Final Test Cover $130; *Magnus* #0 (Robot-fightin') $150; *OMAC* #3 acetate Four-color Separation $200; *Our Army at War* #248 Hand-colored Cover $160; *Our Fighting Forces* #155 (Kirby/Losers) $275; *Phantom Stranger* #16 Four-Color Separation $170; *Rai* #0 (Solar splits) $150; *Secrets of Sinister House* #11 acetate Four-color Separation $140, #16 Approval Cover $115, #9 Uncut Final Test Cover $125; *Star Spangled War Stories* #175 Four-color Separation $135; *Strange Adventures* #228 Approval Cover (Signed: Adams) $150; *Superman* #270 Hand-colored Cover $175; *Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen* #139 Approval Cover $160; *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane* #133 Hand colored Cover $150; *Swamp Thing* #2 Approval Cover $175, #3 Approval Cover $165, #4 Uncut Final Test Cover $150; *The Demon* #1 Approval Cover $350, #3 Approval Cover $160, #4 Uncut Final Test Cover $150, #6 Approval Cover $160, #7 Hand-colored Cover $200, #8 Uncut Final Test Cover $150; *The Unexpected* #115 Hand-colored Cover and matching Approval Cover $350, #145 Hand-colored Cover $150; *Wanted* #8 Hand-colored Cover $150; *World's Finest* #184 Hand-colored Cover $200.

I expect the field to continue to strengthen, as the market continues to gain recognition from mainstream sources, and quality comic-books and related artwork seem to command higher prices with each passing month. Just keep those treasures and other paper collectibles dry and bug-free, and out of the heat and sunlight! (And don't hesitate to contact us if you're ever looking to trade, buy, or sell!)

One little complaint, about something which I found annoying recently, is that eBay is forcing its users to change their User IDs so that e-mail addresses aren't included. We have had our User ID be the same as our e-mail address for five years, and now we've had to truncate our User ID down to just the first part: "keycomics". So, if you are used to watching our eBay auctions, searching under our entire e-mail address, then please make a note that our User ID is shorter now. Thanks. And keep on collecting.

John Paul

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What's selling at our shows here in NJ? Almost everything! Silver and Bronze Marvel and DC are selling pretty well across the board. High-grade at *Guide* and lower grades at or slightly below. Second tier and esoteric comics sell well. We've even seen stacks of

western comics move lately! (Which is *very* unusual for NJ). Golden Age moves nicely to a particular group of collectors that know they'll get better deals than they would at a major auction or a NYC show. These same GA collectors tend to shy away from eBay. They've been burned more than once on over-graded comics, but don't want to pay CGC premiums either. I've recently seen the "new" CGC-graded comics. That great big number *is* easy to read on a dealer's display wall. But why drop the nomenclature? There is still room for it. Why drop it, unless the intent is not to directly associate the numerical grade with the traditional grade? And what purpose would that serve? Well, you can decide that for yourself (I know I have).

What an incredible turnaround in "hot" new comics! Sure, Marvel's Ultimate line is selling well, and Neil Gaiman's *1602* has shown lots of promise. "Trouble" was hot for about five minutes. Yes, thirteen year-olds might think it's funny that Aunt May was a slut, but the customers old enough to actually buy the book seem genuinely offended. If this is the "new" Epic, I'll take the worst of the "old" Epic any day. DC, on the other hand, is blowing the roof off! The *New Teen Titans*, *Outsiders* and *Wonder Woman* are on everyone's want lists and impossible to keep in stock! In a packed dealer's room (over a quarter million comics), we had a *Batman* #1, an *Amazing Fantasy* #15, an *Incredible Hulk* #1, two *Amazing Spider-Man* #1s, a near-complete run of *Fantastic Four*, but not one copy of the first print of the current *Titans* series!

And now for something completely different. Everybody loves a bargain! Many of our customers make a concerted effort to schedule their trip to the show around our "no-minimum bid" auction. It's a great way for dealers to move some overstock (although some actually sometimes take a loss and just put in items to generate a level of excitement). We've seen comics sell for ridiculously low and curiously high prices! But everyone has fun—which is what counts. Well, almost everyone. I've actually had two instances where adult customers that were obviously intending to piece out and resell the lots (one of about twenty comic oriented posters, and one short box of mixed comics) up for auction were bidding against kids that just plain wanted the stuff. In these two cases, dealers picked up the bidding after the kids dropped out, won the lots, and proceeded to just give the children the items! I've even had dealers give me little high signs when kids are bidding on their books to end the auction quickly so that the "tadpoles" win. While this all sounds very altruistic—it is a bit self-serving. As I've noted in past reports, unless we get the next generation interested in comics, we could go the way of—Beanie Babies!

What have we sold? Here are what I consider some of the more interesting sales at the shows (not necessarily the "best" comics sold—but what I think are among the most interesting):

Platinum Age: *Buster Brown and His Resolutions* (FR) $500; *Christian Cartoons* VG $150; *Truth* (11 assorted issues, FR/VG) $100.

Golden and **Atom Age**: *Adventures of Rex The Wonder Dog* #17 VG- $30; *Captain America* #58 FN+ $700; *Millie the Model* #3 VF $175; *Miss Liberty* #1 FN $75; *My Greatest Adventure* #2 VG $90, #4 FN $110; *Operation Peril* #5 FN $65; *Sensation* #81 FN/VF $200; *Star Spangled Comics* #123 VG $75; *Superboy* #7 VG+ $90.

Silver Age: *Amazing Spider-Man* #24 VG $39, #36 GD- (coupon clipped) $10, #64 FN $30; *Avengers* #62 VF/NM $35; *Batman* #234 VG $30; *Blackhawk* #107 FN $50; *Captain Kangaroo* #(FC) 721 FN $75; *Creepy* #1 VG- $10; *Daredevil* #34 VG $8; *Iron Man* #8 VF $35, #26 VF $15; *Journey Into Mystery* #83 (Golden Record Reprint) VF $50; *Army at War* #84 (2nd "Real" Sgt Rock?) VG $45; *Richie Rich* #2 (coverless) $20; *Star Trek* (Gold Key) #3 (photo) VF $175; *Tales of Suspense* #51 VG $25, #54 FN $23; *X-Men* #24 FN $25, #57 VF $60.

Bronze Age: *Amazing Spider-Man* #152 NM- #15, #156 VF/NM $12, #165 VF/NM $9; *Avengers* #130 VF- $6, #136 VF $7, #103 VF/NM $18, #140 VF/NM $11; *Boy Commandos* #2 NM $20; *Daredevil* #104 VG+ $8, #141 VG- $3; *In the Days of the Mob* #1 NM- $75; *Iron Man* #26 VF $15, #52 FN $8; *Spectacular Spider-Man* #28 VF $8; *Weird Mystery Tales* #2 VF $10; *X-Men* #108 VF $34.

Modern (1980s to present): *Animal Man* #1 NM $15; *Batman: Dark Knight Returns* (1st print HC) VF/NM $25; *Cerebus* #2 VF/NM $100; *DC Graphic Novel* #4 (Hunger Dogs) NM $100; *Filth* #1 NM $6; *GI Joe* #155 VF/NM $22; *It's Science With Dr Radium* #1, 2, 4, 5 VF/NM $3 each; *Outsiders* #1 (2003) NM $10; *1602* #1 NM $6; *TMNT* #2 (1st print) VF #25; *2000 AD Annual* (1983 HC) VF/NM $25, *Ultimate Spider-Man* #6 VF/NM $30, #7 NM- $25.

Misc.: Jack Kirby *Gods Portfolio* (VF w/light water damage) $40; 1982 *Marvel Super-Heroes* Puzzle (22"x 33", featuring every Marvel SH) NM in shrink wrap $30; Passaic Book Center Catalogue #3 (one of the original back-issue comic shops) FN $20; *Peanuts* Yo Yo Strings (1970s) VF in package $15.

Opinions expressed in CBM *"Market Reports" are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.*

Michael Naiman Report

[continued from page 71]

one was hard-pressed to find many well-made and/or crafted *Simpsons* toys. Today, you can go to a variety of outlets and find any *Simpsons* toy that'll tickle your fancy. They are well made and continue to generate plenty of sales. Just don't think you're going to be able to cash in by purchasing multiples and slapping them on eBay. At any given time you can find 5000-7500 active listings! My suggestion is to zero in on your favorite character (mine is Krusty and Comic Book Guy) and build from there. Until next time!

58 That Wonderful Year

by Michelle Nolan

This month it's 1958

Some comic book fans would nominate 1958 as one of the dullest years in comic book history, yet it was still wonderful in several respects.

The post-Comics Code industry slump was in its fourth year. A maximum of only six significant publishers remained in the comics field, depending on what "significant" means to you as a collector.

Ironically, the leading "second-tier" publisher, the quirky American Comics Group, created the most unusual character of 1958, one who quickly developed a legendary cult following. Herbie, later known as the "Fat Fury," debuted in ACG's otherwise sober minded *Forbidden Worlds* #73 (Dec) and was surely the most unusual comic book character of the year. I remember reading Herbie in disbelief. This was truly great satire. I was a full-fledged Herbie fan until the company expired in 1967.

"Cult following" also applies to two other 1958 milestones—the first Hanna-Barbera comic, *Dell Four-Color* #937 (Sep) featuring the immortal Ruff and Reddy, and *Superboy* #68 (Oct), with the debut of the original Bizarro concept. Ask any Baby Boomer what his or her favorite television memories are, and those wacky Hanna-Barbera cartoons are surely to be near the top of most lists.

By far the most significant character development of the year, of course, was the debut of the Legion of Super-Heroes in the Superboy story in *Adventure* #247 (Apr). At the time, of course, nobody had the slightest hint how huge this epic would become in the DC Universe, since the Legion seemed like a one-shot event until the characters returned in *Adventure* #267 (Dec 1959).

One of the great villains in comic book history, Brainiac, debuted in the Superman story in *Action* #242 (Jul). Brainiac and the Shrunken City of Kandor, like the Legion of Super-Heroes and Bizarro, would become Silver Age hallmarks. I remember buying all three of these debuts at the newsstand, highly impressed with the sheer imagination involved in their creation.

In 1958, comic books began to respond in earnest to the beginning of the Space Race, which began when the Soviet Union orbited the first satellite, Sputnik, on October 4, 1957. DC was in perfect position to take advantage with its long-established science fiction titles *Strange Adventures* and *Mystery in Space*, masterfully edited by Julius Schwartz. In what seemed like no time, DC weird-mystery anthologies *House of Mystery*, *House of Secrets*, *Tales of the Unexpected* and *My Greatest Adventure* also turned heavily to sci fi.

#17 (Nov/Dec).

Aside from my lifelong love of the Carl Barks Duck stories, which I never missed, that's what I remember best about 1958—DC's thoroughly spectacular science fiction comics. Month after month of wonderfully imaginative, well-drawn stories.

Nothing in the post-Flash Gordon world of comic book science fiction in 1958, though, could top the DC character introduced in *Showcase* #17 (Nov/Dec)—Adam Strange. I still consider the Adam Strange run edited by Schwartz for five years in *Mystery in Space* from 1959-64 to be the height of high comic book adventure on other worlds, ranking impressively close to Alex Raymond's comic-strip version of Flash Gordon.

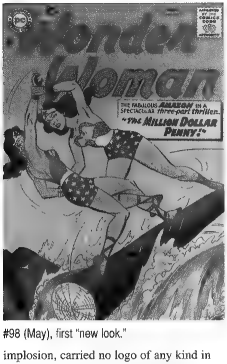
Space Ranger, unadulterated space opera also introduced in 1958 in *Showcase* #15-16, wasn't as memorable but still enjoyed a decent 1959-64 run in *Tales of the Unexpected*.

Two successful DC series debuts in 1958—*Superman's Girl Friend Lois Lane* #1 (Mar/Apr) and *Challengers of the Unknown* #1 (Apr/May)—were set up by earlier tryout appearances in *Showcase*. *Lois Lane*, in fact, became the seventh regular comic book to feature Superman/Superboy, who appeared in no less than 64 comic books in 1959—fully one-sixth of DC's output of 382 issues that year!

Still think 1958 was dull?

Well, 1958 surely was boring if you were a fan of what formerly was known as Timely Comics and ultimately would come to be legendary as Marvel Comics.

Marvel, though ultimately destined to overtake DC's iconic characters in popularity by the end of the 1960s, was never more insignificant than in 1958 the result of the infamous implosion suffered by Martin Goodwin's comic book publishing empire in mid-1957. Marvel's titles, known by their distribution company Atlas until the



#98 (May), first "new look."

implosion, carried no logo of any kind in 1958. Goodman hung on with a limit of eight comic books produced each month in a deal controlled by DC's Independent New Distributors (IND). In all, 16 less-than-stellar bi-monthly titles survived the Atlas implosion.

Dell greatly expanded its television and movie adaptations and took over several humor comics from other companies, thus leading the industry with 420 issues in 1958. DC was just as important with 412 issues, though concentrated in a smaller number of titles. Just imagine—those two companies produced fully half of the corporate comic book total of 1,656 issues in 1958! (That doesn't include the odd series reprints from IW [182] and Accepted [20], which had far more limited geographic circulation in 1958.)

I wouldn't be surprised if Dell and DC combined boasted at least two-thirds of all comic book sales in 1958. They surely had the most efficient distribution—it was never hard to find their titles anywhere.

Erratic Charlton (246 issues) and consistent Harvey (191) were the other major players with national circulation in 1958, along with the ever-loving Archie Series (87). The Archie folks, though, enjoyed a much bigger piece of the financial pie than only 87 issues might indicate, since the vast majority of the comics the company produced were among the leading sellers in the industry.

By 1958, ACG was down to four titles, all monthlies—*Adventures into the Unknown*, *Forbidden Worlds*, *Confessions of the Lovelorn* and *My Romantic Adventures*. But the feisty little company, edited by Richard Hughes, was destined to last for nearly another decade. People who follow eBay auctions tell me that ACG's comics are frequently the subject of bidding wars, with several collectors fanatically trying to complete the entire two-decade run of the firm.

Other than the endless series of Classics Illustrated issues that were still being produced by Gilberton in 1958, that was pretty much the comic book landscape that year. Of far lesser significance were Prize, Pines, Ajax and a few others on their last comic book legs.

Once-proud Prize (Crestwood) was no longer a factor, what with only 29 issues in 1958 including 18 romance issues. Prize held on with even lower numbers until 1963, when DC purchased its last two titles, *Young Romance* and *Young Love*.

Pines, formerly known as Standard/Nedor/Better, hung in with 47 issues in 1958, mostly humor titles led by its Dennis the Menace and Mighty Mouse franchises. Pines left comics in 1959 with its final few issues of *Mighty Mouse*, *Heckle and Jeckle* and *Little Angel*. Dennis the Menace, of course, continued to prosper mightily under the Fawcett-distributed Hallden logo (Hall Syndicate), and Dell took over Mighty Mouse, still a wildly popular cartoon character, especially on TV. I love Mighty Mouse! "Here I come to save the day…"

Ajax-Farrell staggered to a finish with 33 issues in 1958. Robert Farrell's little firm, which produced a lot of 1950's comics with Iger Shop art, consistently suffered from erratic distribution, at least on the West Coast. Magazine Enterprises and St. John, two other leading "second-tier" publishers with several first-rate characters in the late 1940s and well into the '50s, produced their final few issues in 1958.

For the oddest and most redundant title of 1958, though, I nominate Ajax's *My Personal Problem*, which concluded with #3 (May). Are there any impersonal problems? Would a comic book sell about the problems of more than one person? The mind boggles. The only explanation is that many romance titles past and present start with "My," so Ajax must have been reaching for originality. Ajax actually ran two series with this title—the first lasted four issues and the second ran three issues.

One of the other intriguing developments of 1958 was the end of H.G. Peter's old-fashioned rococo art on *Wonder Woman*, which lasted for 16 years. Mike Andru and Ross Esposito took over with #98 (May 1958), and I noticed instantly. Peter's last *Wonder Woman* cover was #38 (Nov/Dec 1949), but the old-time artist continued to handle the inside chores. When I started reading *Wonder Woman* in 1956, I thought it was wonderful, yet the character seemed to have the oddest art style in all of comics. What was really strange was the contrast between the covers and the interior art.

Another noteworthy development in 1958 was that Dell gave up its ill-fated 15-cent pricing experiment, which it started on some of its titles on an irregular basis in 1957. I vividly remember passing up several of my favorite Dell comics in 1957-58 because they cost more than my allowance—which was 10 cents per week! If I wanted more than that, I had to earn it. I usually did, since I wanted to buy at least half a dozen new comics each week, but 15 cents seemed outrageous for a regular-sized comic book in 1958!

Maybe that was what made 1958 a wonderful year, after all—10-cent comic books! By the time the price increased to 12 cents late in 1961 and even to 15 cents for some Dells—I could afford it.

Book Review

by Paul Gravett

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CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED: A CULTUAL HISTORY,
with Illustrations,
by William B. Jones, Jr.
(2003: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers) $55
ISBN 0-7864-1077-9

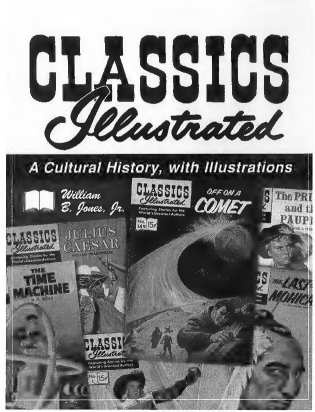
Good stories. That was the way the author's father explained to him what *Classics Illustrated* meant. William B. Jones, Jr. was only five at the time and begged his dad to buy him a 1955 issue he had spotted on the drugstore spinner with his television favorite Davy Crockett on the cover. By the age of six, young Billy was a serious *Classics* collector. His ninth birthday treat was a trip to the Aladdin's cave of a local distributor's warehouse piled high with copies, to pick out as many missing numbers as he wanted.

These were the beginnings of Jones' lifelong passion, both for these comics and for the literature which they stimulated him to explore as a young adult. Like many others, he followed the instructions that concluded most issues: "Now that you have read the *Classics Illustrated* edition, don't miss the [added] enjoyment of the original, obtainable at your school or public library." A father himself now, Jones has pooled years of research, interviews and correspondence, by him and by Hames Ware, Jim Vadeboncoeur, Dan Malan and other experts, into this thorough 280-page survey of one of the 20th century's most successful enterprises in mass education publishing.

From the racks, the *Classics Illustrated* logo at the top left of every cover grabbed the eye like a beacon. The figures prove that the power of the yellow rectangle should not be underestimated. Jones estimates that of the 169 different stories adapted in America from 1941 to 1971, there were 1,343 printings, usually of 100,000 to 250,000 copies each. There were a further 432 printings between 1953 and 1971 of the 77 *Junior* fairy tale editions. Then there were the international translations into 26 languages in 36 countries, as well as new adaptations in Brazil, Greece and Britain. The illustrators were paid just a flat, once-only fee and most of the authors were long dead, so no reprint fees or royalties were due. With peak monthly sales in the USA of two to four million copies, it was virtually a license to print money.

Jones charts the fortunes of Russian Jewish immigrant Albert Kanter (1897-1973), who in 1941 conceived of *Classic Comics* as self-contained abridgments of a literary work into a single comic book. To produce the first issue, *The Three Musketeers*, Kanter and his partners gambled $8,000 for 250,000 copies; they tripled their investment. From these modest beginnings, Kanter built his family's lucrative Gilberton publishing empire. His brother Michael was warehouse manager, and his two sons played important roles. William was an editor (1946-56), later moving to England to supervise a European program of new titles, while Hal, working inside Hollywood, could set up tie-ins with forthcoming movies.

Gilberton's decline and fall were triggered in 1961 by the loss of its second-class mailing permit, vital for the company's subscription and mail order services. Jones identifies other factors: vanishing outlets, as local stores were replaced by supermarkets; cheap



paperback editions of classics aimed at kids; the decision by the F.W. Woolworth chain, one of Gilberton's main retailers, to stop stocking comic books due to declining sales; and the inexorable, seductive power of television. Gilberton's U.S. operation was forced to stop all but a handful of new titles and stick to reprints and revivals of retired issues. Finally, Kanter decided to sell off *Classics Illustrated* in December 1967 for half a million dollars to entrepreneur Patrick Frawley, whose efforts sadly failed to save the company from closure on April 21, 1971, nearly thirty years after Kanter's dream had begun. Jones examines subsequent attempts to continue *Classics Illustrated*, by First Publishing in 1990-91 and Acclaim in 1996-98, both short-lived.

Through thirty-six chapters, twelve appendices and an eight-page color gallery, Jones offers perceptive criticism of every issue and artist, considering their strengths and failings. His longer profiles of significant colorful *Classics* illustrators bring them to life.

There's the panache, on and off the page, of the feisty, red-haired Louis Zansky, later an award-winning painter, who had his check bounce and threatened to throw Gilberton's business manager out of the window unless he paid him there and then in cash. Two illustrators of the old school—the tall, flamboyant, Paris-trained H.C. Kiefer, sporting a cape and aristocratic airs, and Hungarian-born etcher Alex Blum, always impeccable in suit and tie—gave the comics a resonant, anachronistic antiqueness. Their successor was the equally gentlemanly Norman Nodel, who brought his experience of singing and acting in the St. Louis Opera Chorus, notably in his depiction of Faust.

Younger blood came from former movie-poster artist Rudy Palais, famed for his "cinematic" angles and prolific use of "plewds" or sweat drops, and from the hearty Lou Cameron, the "John Wayne of comic books." On *The Count of Monte Cristo*, Cameron was ready to quit over Gilberton's editorial meddling and insensitive management, so he rewrote some speech balloons, one of which said "I condemn you also to die of boredom, as this is almost the end of the story." The editors spotted and corrected them in time and never commissioned Cameron again, but he'd enjoyed a little revenge. The most demanding editor was Roberta Strauss, a stickler for detail, who would count soldiers' buttons or pleats in skirts and even called an editorial meeting in her hospital room only days after her son's birth.

First-hand anecdotes such as these add humor and humanity to Jones's study.

In all, dozens of artists and some scriptwriters are credited and analyzed here, although some credits still baffle the experts, including those of several handsomely painted covers, and of the interior art to the second 1961 versions of *Adventures of Cellini* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. To me, the crisp elegance and refined composition of the *Cellini* artwork strongly suggest it was drawn by Dino Battaglia (1923-83). After all, who better to adapt the Italian Benvenuto Cellini's autobiography than an Italian comics maestro? By 1961, he had already been working for some years for publishers in Britain, where he might have come to William Kanter's notice. I'd love to hear what others think.

Classics Illustrated lived up to Kanter's noble goal of introducing famous tales to a new readership, but for a fair share of lesser stories it was their last outing before becoming all but forgotten. Geoffrey O'Brien put it well in *The Village Voice Literary Supplement*, Jan/Feb 1989: "The titles adapted were books in the library of someone's parents, a fixed body of tradition to be handed on. But the ground was already shifting. Many of the ostensibly deathless works were in fact dying. How many would ever again seek out *Lorna Doone* or *Under Twin Flags* or *The Scottish Chiefs*? Rather than celebrating the renewal of tradition from generation to generation, the *Classics* became testimony to a tradition's gradual erasure, a four-color funeral pyre."

Nevertheless, the *Classics* line did perpetuate many literary masterpieces which look set to never disappear thanks to fresh interpretations for future generations. Hollywood has made recent blockbuster versions of *The Time Machine* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*, television revivals of Dickens or the Brontë sisters continue to sell to channels worldwide, and comics creators are still adapting the classics, from Lorenzo Mattotti's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* for NBM Books to P. Craig Russell's *The Ring* and other operas for Dark Horse. Lou Cameron was right when he said, "It began as one of the best ideas in the field." It still is, because after food, clothing, shelter and companionship, our other primal need will always be for more "good stories" like these.

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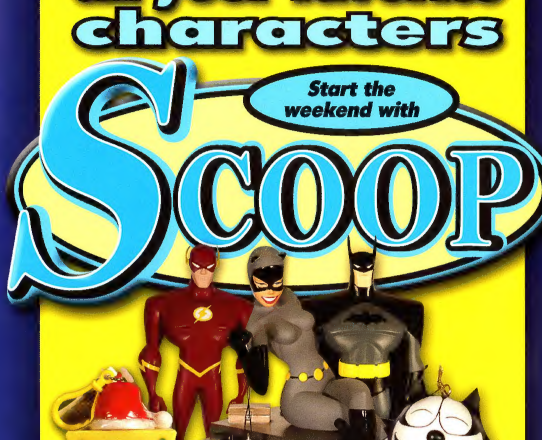

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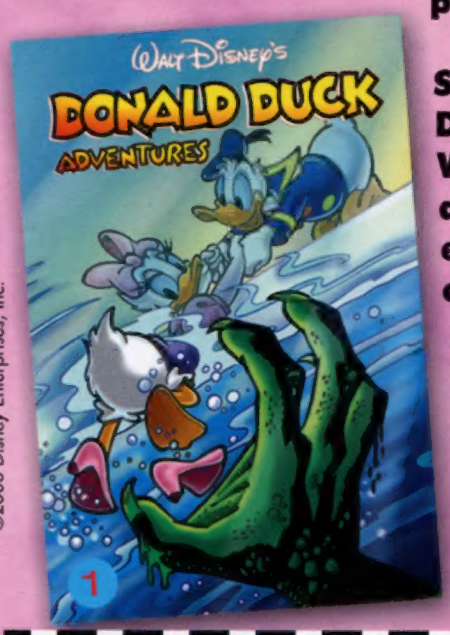

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